RE-ENTRY: PREPARING THE LOCAL CHURCH TO PROVIDE A HEALTHY START TO RECENTLY RELEASED PRISONERS

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ABSTRACT

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This project was designed to assess the attitude of the congregants of Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Dayton, Ohio as it relates to assisting ex-offenders. Congregants were encouraged to engage in social justice and political action issues that impact the aftercare of ex-offenders. The researcher utilized an action research model that utilized the church as the place of convergence where the judiciary, ex-offenders, and the faith communities convened for healthy discussions on how the integration of ex-offenders back into the community could take place. The findings indicate that parishioners were inspired to assist ex-offenders in their return to Dayton, Ohio.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the love, friendship, and encouragement of my dear wife and partner, Reverend Rosie Marie Jiles Hudson, whose courage and strength inspired me to believe in myself and dream. I am most thankful for the patience and understanding of my children and grandchildren who did not complain over the loss of precious moments that I spent working on my laptop. Let the moments that were spent on this project away from them serve as a milestone to remind them that with faith all things are possible.

I wish to acknowledge the Presiding Prelate of the Second Episcopal District of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, E. Lynn Brown, for his friendship and support without which the completion of this project would not have been possible. I want to also thank Bishop and Mrs. Nathaniel and Mae C. Linsey, Bishop OH. Lakey, Rev. O'Neal Shyne, Sr. and Rev. Doctor L.L. Reddick II whose encouragement and financial support made it possible for me to return to school after a twenty-six year hiatus. I extend my gratitude to my context associates, Sister Patsy Bryant, and the members of Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church for their understanding and support. Your work of faith and your patience encouraged me during those moments of doubt. To the Room Fellowship Prison ministry Teams in the Cincinnati and Dayton areas: thank you for the service that you render to the men and women behind institutional walls.

I wish to recognize the profound impact of my mentors and all of the professors of the United Theological Seminary whose instruction ignited in me a fire for scholarship

and stretched me both spiritually and intellectually. I extend my sincerest gratitude to Minister Debra Judkins, President of the Dayton Area Prison Team for her guidance and support on this project. I also wish to thank my professional associates who took time to share their wisdom with me. Last, but certainly not least of all, I want to thank the members of my cohort group. It has been a blessing to share this journey with you, and I will forever cherish our friendships, which symbolize to me sincere Christian love.

DEDICATION

TO

Rev. Rosie Marie Jiles Hudson
My wife and Partner in Ministry
For the last Thirty-nine years

And to the
Memory of my Loving Grandparents who saved my life
And instilled a thirst for learning in me that has never been satisfied
Malachi and Inez Blunt

And finally to the
Memory of four men who mentored and shaped my ministry;
Rev. Charles E. Bigbee, Rev. A. C. Mc McClendon,
Rev. Doctor T.C. Lightfoot, Jr. And Rev Doctor H. L. Burton

INTRODUCTION

This writer has been involved in prison ministry for most of his 37 years as a pastor. He was an untrained clergy person in the area of prison ministry, and the result yielded disappointment and frustration. It was not until Reverend Rosie Hudson was assigned the task of organizing and directing the first Annual Conference Prison Ministry Outreach Team, having earned her Masters Degree in Social Work. She went about this task with professionalism equal to none other that this writer has seen. Her first effort was educational; she brought in trained counselors who instructed volunteers about the rules and operational procedures of the institution. The training that the volunteers received prepared them for what would be an eye-opening, but satisfying, experience. For the last twelve years, this writer and his spouse have provided ministry at Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Dayton, Ohio, have ministered to ex-offenders and prison inmates, and have derived great satisfaction from witnessing the transformation and triumph of prisoners who have found fellowship and acceptance from these faithful witnesses.

The writer is convinced that the work of the office of the Chaplin and Room Prison Fellowship ministries are essential for the rehabilitation of the offenders while they serve their prison sentences. However, this project is not focused on the good work behind the walls that are initiated by prison ministries, it focuses on the ignorance and lack of attention of the faith community. The faith community has neglected its responsibility in playing a vital role in the integration of the prisoner back into mainstream American society. For this reason, the writer seeks to empower the church to

Biblical Foundation – In the book of "Genesis," we view an innocent man, Joseph, who is serving his sentence in prison, is ready for freedom and national leadership, but the leadership of Egypt, represented by Pharaoh, is unaware of his great leadership potential. The story only illustrates the many offenders who are even now incarcerated and forgotten. However, like Joseph, they too may possess leadership potential that only will be revealed after someone acknowledges their potential and gives them a second chance. As the writer contemplated this section of his work, Latta R. Thomas, Fredrick C. Tiffany and Sharon N. Ringe's books were most helpful (see Appendix G and H).

Theological Foundation – The writer undertook the difficult task of reviewing what he had been proud of and saw just how much more needed to be done. He decided to see how others were confronting the issue, which led to this soul-searching analysis, but no local church had undertaken this project. I looked back in history to see if there was any information that could help me. I found some information there. I needed a theological model to follow. I reviewed and selected the Black or African American Theology of Liberation promoted by James Cone and the late Bishop Joseph Johnson.

Historical Foundation - the researcher relied on the historical information found in the writings and lectures of John Hope Franklin, Ivan Douglas Hicks and Andrew Skotnicki. They provided a historical context and an insightful look into the tragedies and consequences that happen when westernized societies ignore the voices of the oppressed and weak. Jim Waller's book was very helpful in analyzing the social, political and religious divide in this country as it relates to daily living in the United States. See Appendix F

Methodology — The research model in this study was the qualitative model. It employed 12 sermons, pre-post survey questionnaires, evaluation forms, workshop presenters and panelist. Eleven yes/no questions were developed for the pre/post test. The responses were converted into percentages for determining congregational attitude. The data was coded to clusters of questions that corresponded to the expected outcomes. A statistician was engaged to insure that the calculations were interpreted correctly.

"Chapter Five" — the experience was designed to takes participants through a process that exposed them to members of the judiciary, ex-offenders who are well known in the community for their successful return home. The event took place on a Friday night with an early morning meeting followed by lunch and an afternoon seminar.

"Chapter Six" the presenters were well prepared and knowledgeable in the area of recidivism. The evaluation forms indicated that the participants enjoyed the format. The speakers were very good and helped us see the nature of the emergency confronting the community and the ex-offender. The group ended the event looking forward to the next step in the development of this ministry. Though this first step was narrow by design, it should not be used to measure the magnitude of the crisis that exists in the African-American community. At this point, the African-American family is in a place it has not been since slavery. Single females head most African-American families, while large numbers of African -American males are in the criminal justice system. The African-American family is in danger of disappearing. This project rightly indicates that we are in reactive mode. We must confront this crisis, but also change these trends by focusing proactively on the next generation.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Living under the tyrannical environment of segregation and racial bigotry caused this writer emotional pain that is still evident whenever he reminiscences about those dark days. Those days clouded the perception of his identity and what it meant to be an African in America whose culture had been co-opted and negated. Moreover, his dysfunctional family atmosphere, the lack of compassion of his local church, and the repressive environment of the 1950s Civil Rights era, profoundly impacted this writer's self-esteem. Notwithstanding, years have passed since those days of marching for civil rights.

Today, he views his world through "lenses" that have been cleansed through the emerging scholarship of African American Studies and Liberation Theology, which he believes accurately reflect the contributions and accomplishments of African Americans. His new perspective enables him to see himself as one whom God has created in God's Image, and that his African culture is one rich with history, traditions, and royalty.

The researcher affirms that he is a child of the King of Kings. He realizes that he can have a positive influence on the world, and that he can make a difference in his community. He pledges to offer his voice, as did the noble host of truth tellers like Martin Luther King and Malcolm X whose selfless contributions aided in the liberation of the African community.

The researcher intends to impact his community by empowering the church to become more involved in prison ministries. He believes that the church, as God's

representatives of restoration, should guide and assist ex-offenders so that they can be agents of change and productive citizens of liberation in America. This project's objective is to establish strategies that identify, develop, and prepare the local church to provide prison ministries to families and individuals who are under judicial supervision or who are in their final stages of incarceration and will be returning to the city of Dayton. The researcher believes that the church can become an advocate for ex-offenders and provide them guidance by addressing the social justice issues that confront them when they return to their homes.

Spiritual Autobiography

The writer is a 57-year-old African American male. He was born on November 20, 1949 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. His mother, Agnes, was a 16-year-old high school student who deceived his adult father, Jesse, into believing that she was a college freshman. At the time, Jesse was a World War II veteran attending college on the Montgomery G.I. bill. Subsequently, Agnes and Jesse engaged in an affair, which led to her pregnancy. Although the authorities were called, after an investigation it was determined that Jesse was not at fault. Nevertheless, Jesse accepted responsibility and made plans to marry Agnes, but the marriage never took place. He was suddenly recalled into active duty to fight in the Korean Conflict. However, when Jesse returned from the war to claim his family, Agnes had married a man almost three times her age. This man was very cruel and physically and mentally abused the writer and his mother.

After Jesse knocked on the door expecting to greet his family, the writer's stepfather confronted Jesse, which led to a physical confrontation. Jesse informed the writer that after the fight, he decided to leave Pine Bluff. Jesse believed that if he had stayed in the city, someone would have been killed.

The writer's loving maternal grandparents, Inez and Troy Dennis, protected him as much as they could from the brutality of his stepfather. Consequently the state of Arkansas took the writer from his mother and placed him with his grandparents who cared for him during his formative years.

Tragically, his grandfather, Troy Dennis died while the writer was an infant, and Inez remarried Malachi Blunt, whose instruction would profoundly play a vital role in the writer's life. He was a positive role model who taught the writer the importance of hard work, caring for the family, and how to survive as a Black man in the racist South, which was dominated by the Ku Klux Klan. Malachi worked part-time as a ditch digger, and during the other part of the day, he worked in the cotton fields picking cotton. Malachi taught the writer how to pick cotton, and the two worked the fields together to earn money to feed the family.

The writer grew up not knowing anything about his biological father except his name was Jesse and that he lived in a small town 60 miles from Pine Bluff. Although his biological father was absent during his formative years, there were good men who were positive role models for him. One of them was Reverend James Williams, a neighbor who was a pastor of a small church on the outskirts of the city of Pine Bluff. The writer remembers this godly man who frequently took him to church on the first and third Sundays of the month. At the age of six, the writer developed an enduring faith in Jesus

Christ. This was partially due to the influence of Rev. Williams. He accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and he wanted to be like Pastor Williams and preach just like him too.

Unfortunately, one Sunday morning while preaching, Pastor Williams died. As he was closing his sermon in the grand style of a Baptist preacher of the South, with all the sound and fervor within him, Rev. Williams said "If you miss me from preaching down here and you can't find me no where, come on up to bright glory you'll find me up there." With those words fresh from his lips, he fell to the floor and exhaled his final breath.

The writer remembers that it was a long and sad ride home that Sunday. One of the Deacons, Brother Jones from the church, drove Mrs. Williams and the writer back home. That was a very sad time for the close-knit community of Pine Bluff. Many people were overwhelmed by grief over the loss of this great leader. The writer was devastated by this tragic event and no one could comfort him. People gathered from miles around to attend Reverend William's home-going service. The writer remembers sitting with Mrs. Williams during the funeral service as if he were her son. Somehow, sitting near Mrs. Williams made dealing with the sorrow easier to bear. There was great sorrow, and yet through the preaching of the word of God, there was also a great expectation of seeing Reverend Williams again in the resurrection.

It was not until the writer was 13 years old that he came in contact with his father's side of his family. When the writer went for the first time to meet his family at the Hudson farm, he was surprised to learn that he had eight uncles and aunts, all of whom were younger than he. The writer had learned that his paternal grandmother had

died while his father was in the military stationed in Europe. She died leaving his grandfather, Henry, with six children to rear alone. He could not care for the children by himself, so he remarried a young woman, Betsy, who was twenty years younger than he was.

A few weeks after meeting his family at the Hudson Farm, the writer met a beautiful young lady named Clemenstine at Townsend Park sitting on the swing set. This was the only park in the central and southern part of the state of Arkansas where African Americans could go to celebrate the ending of the school year. He remembers seeing buses loaded with kids from all over the state of Arkansas in that park. It was on such an occasion that they met. The writer soon discovered that she was related to his paternal grandfather whom he had met a few weeks earlier. After much conversation that day, he learned that Clemenstine was his sister.

High School brought many positive male role models into the writer's life who helped build his self-esteem. Mr. Willie Anderson, the high school band director, introduced the writer to the world of music. Through hard work and practice, the writer became an accomplished and sought after musician. Mr. James Seawood, the booking agent for a Rhythm and Blues band that played behind famous Blues artists O.V. Wright and Johnnie Taylor, helped build the self-esteem of the writer by introducing him to other famous artists. The writer and Mr. Seawood's children were classmates in high school and were also members of the school's marching band. Mr. Seawood received permission from the writer's grandmother for the writer to join his band and tour the southern part of the country to play in what is affectionately known as the Chitterling Circuit. He played

in nightclubs like the Paradise Club in Memphis, Tennessee, the Blue Note Lounge in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Heads Palladium in Shreveport Louisiana.

Shortly after joining the band, someone from the writer's home church, The Present View Missionary Baptist Church, called his high school and filed a complaint that a minor was playing in nightclubs. The writer was completely devastated with what he felt was the intrusion of the church into his life. The constant ridicule coming from his classmates plus this intrusion was more than he could handle. He was afraid that the effort of this unnamed person from the church would succeed and he would be forced from the band, so he stopped going to church.

Sometime after age fourteen the writer started to believe what other band members were saying. They said that, "Church was a joke and that God was a myth." He spent most of his time during high school playing in nightclubs and graduated with a 1.85 grade point average. He was sorely disappointed on graduation day with his grade point average, but his grandmother was beaming with pride over the fact that he was graduating. He would be the first person in the family to earn a high school diploma.

The writer remembered as he sat in his chair waiting to receive his diploma the sacrifices that his grandmother, Inez, had made so that he could finish high school. Inez had a thirst for knowledge like no one he had ever known; she never had the opportunity to go to school. As he sat in that chair, the writer remembered the day he had come home from his first grade class after having learned the alphabet. He and Inez sat in the middle of their living room floor near the stove, and the writer taught his grandmother the alphabet. Now, here he was about to receive a diploma that meant so much to her, but

meant so little to him. Inez made the writer promise her that he would go to college and earn a college degree.

After graduation, the writer attended Arkansas Agriculture Mechanical & Normal College (A.M.& N.) now known as the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. On his first day on campus, he met the woman who he felt would be his wife, Rosie M. Jiles. One year later, they were united in holy matrimony. They spent two years in college at AM&N College. They withdrew from the college early because Rosie was expecting her first child and because of death threats from the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). The KKK had vowed to lynch the writer because he had led a protest march over the mistreatment of some of the neighborhood children at the newly integrated elementary, junior and senior high schools. This school was formerly his school, the all black Townsend Park Elementary, Junior and Senior High School.

Consequently, Inez petitioned the writer's aunt who lived in Indianapolis, Indiana, to allow the young couple to live with them in Indianapolis. The writer remembered that he was afraid, but he was determined not to let the KKK deter him from seeking justice for the children who had been abused. He remembered his grandmother's words, "You are not going to die in my house." In December 1969, the writer moved his family from Arkansas to Indianapolis, Indiana where he found a job and began saving money to buy a house.

On a warm spring day in April of 1970, after laboring many hours with hammer and nails to modernize the kitchen of his new home, the writer took a bad fall. He then decided to hire a carpenter to complete the construction that he had started. The writer inquired about a contractor, and a couple of his friends recommended a man named

Charles E. Bigbee who was a general contractor. He shall never forget the day Charles Bigbee knocked on his door and introduced himself. They exchanged greetings and then the writer showed him the work that he wanted done. Mr. Bigbee assured him that the mistakes that the writer had made could be corrected and that the writer could reduce his cost if he helped with the work. This was a project that the writer felt that he had wasted enough money and energy on trying to do by himself. Now, he would have the opportunity to not only save money but to also learn how to do the job correctly by helping Mr. Bigbee. Mr. Bigbee's work ethic impressed the writer. He was friendly, kind, patient, honest and slow to respond during conversations. It was as though Mr. Bigbee was searching his mind for the right response. At the end of the job, the writer invited Mr. Bigbee to stay for a few minutes to drink a beer. He agreed to stay. The writer opened his can of beer and took a drink, and they talked about their life's' experiences. He took his can and held it in his hand and during the discussion he told the writer that he was a minister at a church. There they were sitting face to face; the writer was drinking his beer, but Mr. Bigbee only held his can in his hands as he shared his faith in God. He invited the writer to go to church with him at the Breeding Tabernacle CME Church on the following Sunday. The writer was feeling a little uncomfortable, but he consented in order to get Mr. Bigbee to leave him alone. He had no intentions of going to a church. After Mr. Bigbee left, he thought about how impressed he was with Bigbee's persistence. He approached the writer as very few people had before. He felt as though Bigbee cared about him just as Reverend Williams had. He also was impressed at how Bigbee did not cast judgment on him while the writer drank beer; Bigbee never opened his can of beer nor did he try to dissuade the writer from drinking his beer.

The writer was hoping that Bigbee would forget about the invitation to attend the Sunday morning service at his church. However, Mr. Bigbee arrived early that Sunday morning, but the writer felt strange about going to church. He was still bitter with the person who made the call to the school all those years earlier. It was because of their action he had developed doubts about God. He believed that the church was filled with hypocrites. However, there was something real and warm about Charles Bigbee that made him feel as though he could trust him.

For the first time in eight years, the writer was seated inside of a church. He found himself in the midst of a group of people who treated him kindly. He heard an inspiring sermon from the pastor who then invited people to the altar for prayer and to join the Church. The writer refused to respond to the altar call that day, but the words of the Pastor were planted deep within his heart. At five o'clock Monday morning, he accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior. The following Sunday the writer and his family joined the Breeding Tabernacle CME Church. He felt that he was now in a personal relationship with God and a burden had been lifted from his shoulders.

It was not long after uniting with the church that he was assigned to work on the board of Christian Education and the Sunday School Department. At the ripe age of twenty, the writer experienced the call to preach the gospel, a call he resisted with everything within him. His efforts at avoiding preaching proved to be futile. He accepted the call of God into Christian ministry.

By 1972, the writer's mother, sisters, and brothers moved to Indianapolis, Indiana. They lived in a housing project on New Jersey Street. On July 3, 1972, his brother Maurice celebrated his 18th birthday. Tragically, on that day, a 16-year-old boy murdered

Maurice over a cigarette: He died on his mother's living room floor in front of the writer's baby boy. The writer went searching for the person who had murdered his brother to exact vengeance. The writer believes that if he had found him, he would have killed him. The writer's wife, Rosie, called the two men whom he respected most, Charles Bigbee and Pastor A.C. McClendon. They found the writer wandering through the dark alleyways with a mob of people looking for his brother's murderer. Brother Bigbee and Pastor McClendon called him to the side and convinced the writer to leave that mob.

His brother's murderer, Maurice, was captured and sent to prison where he himself was later murdered six months later. The writer began spending time in the area where his brother was killed. He saw the deplorable and hopeless conditions of the neighborhood and the children of the community. The writer prayed to God that he would save the community and take care of the children, whom he saw as victims of an oppressive system of poverty and violence.

The writer decided that he could not sit idly while the children suffered, so he brought the children to Sunday school with him. Before long, the writer had gathered 24 children to attend Sunday school with him. After repeated attempts to secure transportation failed, the Reverend A.C. McClendon Sr. suggested that the writer start a Sunday school class in that community. It was while he did the work of a local preacher, who happened to be a Sunday school teacher, that the writer felt the call of God to establish a congregation. The church was named the Burton Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. For the next thirteen years, the writer worked with the congregation and community in the areas of social justice and political action.

Over the years, the writer came to recognize that God has called him and given him the ministerial grace to be a pastor, evangelist and Christian education worker. For the past 35 years, he was fortunate to have many men and women in ministry cross his path who have invested their time and talent in his life. The Revered Doctor H.L. Burton, former Presiding Elder of the Cincinnati-Dayton Indianapolis District of the 2nd Episcopal District of the C.M.E Church carried him all over the country as his aide. There were times when the writer felt that he was being looked over, left out and laughed at by his peers. He felt that preachers with less ability and commitment to the church were given larger fellowships while he was left at Burton Temple, which at that time had only one hundred members. The Reverend Dr. Burton reminded him that the writer was a gifted preacher and that one day he would look back over his ministry and see that his time in Indianapolis was the most important time in his ministry. Dr. Burton shared his knowledge and wisdom with the writer. He taught the writer important life skills of the ministry and the value of showing compassion to those who need it most. Today, many who knew Dr. Burton say that the writer reflects his love and passion for preaching.

There have been many men of God who have profoundly impacted the writer's ministry. Pastor A.C. McClendon Sr., the man of God most responsible for his love of bible study and prayer meeting, preached the message that led him to accept Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. It was through his teaching style and faithfulness to the ministry of God's Word that the writer responded to the call of God to share his faith boldly with others. This meek servant of God had twenty persons respond to God's call into the preaching ministry and seven churches were born out of his church without his membership declining.

The writer also acknowledges the roles that the Bishops of the CME Church played in his ministry. Bishop Murchinson invested in the writer's dream by purchasing the building and grounds of Burton Temple CME Church so that the twenty-four children could have a place to worship. Bishops P.R Shy, O.H. Lakey, and Bishop Nathaniel Linsey encouraged the writer to seek education and to love people. This writer is thankful for Bishop Edward Lynn Brown, his current Bishop, who has entrusted him with leadership responsibility in the Ohio Central Indiana Annual Conference and has shown him compassion.

The Episcopal Fathers know that the writer had been equipped as an evangelist, but they were also able to see that he had the natural gift of conflict resolution. They sent him to congregations that were in crisis. The writer has also been favored to watch how each of the five churches that he has served grew, both spiritually and numerically. In these churches, a close relationship developed between the pastor and the congregants, which allowed healing to take place. However, there were times in the process of being an agent of change that the writer was emotionally wounded by the very people he was sent to lead. During these times, he had to trust that God would resolve the issues and cause healing.

The writer has been very active in the areas of social justice and political action. His time as a pastor in Indianapolis set the tone and pattern for his social and political action ministry. He learned how to work closely with city officials and other community leaders to confront the social evils that were destroying the people in the community. The writer prayed and cried many nights over the plight of the young people God entrusted to him. These children came to church for worship then returned to their homes and talked

to their parents about their wrongdoing. Some of the parents stopped their children from coming to the church for worship. They thought that they could silence the church by keeping the children home, but some of the children's grandparents who had become members of the church started to cry out against the violence. The members of the church marched in the community, and they told the pimps, prostitutes and drug dealers to stop their illegal activities.

The writer had his life threatened and had to move his family out of the neighborhood to his aunt's house. When asked if he cared about being killed, the writer always responded that if they killed him, they had to also kill their family members who marched along side him.

THE CONTEXT

Harris Memorial is a member of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, formerly the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. This Church was born in the rural and urban centers in the south. It was given birth at the end of the civil war because of the change of the relationship between former slaves and their former masters.

Othal Hawthorne Lakey quotes John Nelson Norwood who states: "The most pronounced separation of a part of the church was the establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, by the General Conference of the Methodist Church which met in New York in 1844."[1] Lakey goes on to state, "Slavery was the most explosive and divisive social issue which either The Methodist Episcopal Church or the nation itself had

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[1] John Nelson Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church 1844: A Study of Slavery and Ecclesiastical Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: Porcupine Press, 1976).

to face." [2] He further suggests that slavery was ingrained in the southern way of life and its abolition was just as deeply ingrained in the mind of those in the North. The formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church South was a precursor and predictor of the inability of the Union to coexist half slave and half free. John Hope Franklin states, "When President-elect Lincoln arrived in Washington late in February 1861, the nation he was to administer during the next four years was rapidly falling apart. Seven states in the lower South had already seceded, and there was talk of the same momentous steps being taken in each of the other slave states."[3] This nation was thrown into a bloody civil war that ended in 1865. Lakey writes: "following the civil war in which slaves were set free, Methodists who had been slaves felt that continued membership in the same church with former slave-masters was impossible."[4] The 1866 General Conference of the Methodist Church South meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, acting on a request coming from former slave members of that church for a church of their own, empowered them to organize a new Methodist body composed of former slaves. The first conference to organize was the Tennessee conference, with the second being the Kentucky conference from which the name of the new Colored Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) Church would come and the first Bishop was elected William Henry Miles. The Organizing General Conference of this new church met in Jackson, Tennessee on December 16, 1870. Five annual conferences had been organized and forty-four presiding elders districts, by that time. Forty-four men came to Jackson by train, on horseback, wagon and one or two

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[2] Othal Hawthorne,Lakey, *The History of the C.M.E. Church* (Memphis TN : C.M.E. Publishing House, 1985), 28.

[3] John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom A History of African Americans* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc 7th Edition 1994), 198.

[4] Othal Hawthorne Lakey, *The History of the C.M.E. Church* (C.M.E. Publishing House, 1985), 29.

came by walking. Bishop Robert Paine of the Methodist Church South was the presiding officer. Two Bishops were elected: William Henry Miles from Kentucky and Richard H. Vanderhorst from Georgia were elected and ordained. The C.M.E. Church spread across the Ohio River as people migrated from the farm to the city. A group migrated to Dayton, Ohio from Mt. Sterling Kentucky led by Alice Bridges who was the driving force behind the formation of the first Colored Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) Church in Dayton, Ohio. This group met at sister Bridges home at 116 Columbia Street. Sister Bridges, along with Henrietta Miller and Susie Blackburn, labored to gather enough people to form a new congregation. After much labor, this group petitioned the Kentucky conference to assist them in forming a new congregation. On April 27, 1917 Bishop Charles Henry Phillips came to Dayton and presided at the formal organization meeting; Bishop Phillips assigned the task of guiding this new tender plant to Reverend M.W. Haycraft. The congregation sub-rented space in the old Wesleyan Church on Scott Street and selected the name for the new church, "Scott Street C.M.E. Church." At the annual conference later that year Reverend H.E. Harris was sent from the Kentucky conference to pastor The Scott Street C.M.E. Church Dayton, Ohio. Rev. Harris led this congregation from 1917 through 1924; Reverend C. L. Howard led the congregation from 1924 through 1927. The congregation's rapid growth led to the purchase of a building at Germantown and Bank Street in 1924 and the name of the congregation was changed to Trinity C.M.E. Church. By 1927, the congregation outgrew that location; they purchased land at 485 South Broadway Street where they built larger facilities and were renamed Phillips Temple C.M.E. Church, after the presiding prelate Bishop C.H. Phillips.

From its birth in 1870, The C.M.E. Church has been and continues to address social justice and political action issues confronted by the people of African decent who were slaves.

On May 17, 1957, the general conference passed a resolution put forth principally by Rev. C. H. Tobias to do away with the racial designation in the name of the Church after the resolution passed the general conference. Rev. J. B. Boyd moved that the name of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church be changed to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. The motion passed and the "C" for colored became Christian. Some viewed the change as a move to give the impression that we were claiming to be the only Christian group among the Methodist bodies, while others saw this change as a primary illustration of how middle class blacks sought to deny their blackness and impression without foundation. Bishop O. H. Lakey states:

> It can be easily understood that the change of the name from "Colored" to "Christian" came out of the move toward integration on the part of Black Americans, and but by calling itself "Christian" Methodist Episcopal Church, seemed to be giving the impression that of all the Methodist bodies in the world, it was setting itself up as the only one truly "Christian." Of course that was not the intention, and CMEs were quick to point out that the change from "Colored" to "Christian" was a change in name only —not in spirit or attitude! Yet, when writing or speaking of "Christian Methodist" there is a need for explanation and rational that was unnecessary prior to 1954. The other problem the change of name presented for CMEs was the impression that they were in some fashion ashamed of the fact that they were indeed " colored" E "Franklin Frazier in fact used the CME change from Colored to Christian as a primary Illustration of how middle class Blacks south to deny their Blackness![5] Such an impression is inaccurate. It was clear that the leaders of the CME Church responded in a rather responsible manner to a dilemma created because of a religious heritage that was in many ways unique. They had chosen a name as an expression of their pride in their race and their determination

[5] Maurice H. Ursher, "Redemption and the Rise of the Black Church," *Perkins Journal* XXXV. No. 2 (Winter: 1983): 26-34.

> to be free. But the church came out of a particular period of American history. As the church moved into this more modern era, which brought about a totally different social economic-cultural milieu, CMEs responded by eliminating the racial designation as no longer applicable to whom they were or what they were about. We might also point out that the elimination of the racial designation actually came out of a sense of racial pride rather than a denial of it on the part of CME leaders. Among the leaders were many recognized leaders of the race—J. A. Hamlett, W.Y. Bell, Channing H. Tobias, W.L. Graham, B. Julian Smith, J. Claude Allen, L.S. White, N.S. Curry, E.W. Taggert, R.B. Shorts, and H.C. Bunton. They were in the forefront of the struggle for equal rights for their people. As we have said, they could scarcely preach the Gospel of God's love for all of God's Children, fight for the elimination of segregation based on race or color, and compete with other Methodist bodies—especially the blacks who were in the Methodist Church—if their church had a name that, in this different era of American history, conveyed the image of racial exclusiveness."[6]

By 1946, under the Ministry of Rev. A.W. Womack, Phillips Temple in Dayton, Ohio was overflowing with people.[7] Bishop Porter conceived the idea of a second church in Dayton while visiting the host congregation before the annual conference in 1946. Bishop Porter saw an overcrowded service and membership and was led to expand the faith community in Dayton by adding a second congregation. Bishop Porter made an inquiry about the location of a second church and discovered that the original site of Phillips Temple at 601 Germantown Street was for sale for $12,000. Bishop Porter was able to reach an agreement with the owners of the church and paid a $500.00 retainer. At the end of the 1946 annual conference, Rev. Emmaus Fitten was assigned the task of building a new congregation in Dayton, Ohio. The first gathering and meeting of the

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[6] Othal Hawthorne Lakey, *The History of the C.M.E. Church* (Memphis, TN: C.M.E. Publishing House, 1985), 541-542.

[7] Historical minutes of the Philips Temple CME Church and Historical record of Harris Memorial Church Dayton, Ohio.

congregation was held at Smith's Memorial Chapel on 368 South Broadway Street on November 23, 1947, after months of extensive personal evangelistic crusades and meetings at the Smith's Chapel. Bishop Porter and others gathered to celebrate the official opening of the Harris Memorial C.M.E. Church with Rev. Fitten as the founding pastor. This congregation has been a leader in the movement for social justice and political action. After worshiping at the Germantown address for 15 years, they bought a building in November 1962, located at 1100 Kammer Avenue. Harris Memorial's congregation grew both numerically and spiritually and, after 33 years of community activism at the Kammer location, the church relocated on December 24, 1995 to its present location at 3950 Haney Road.

After the move to its current location, the congregation's zeal for community activism had grown cold through changing administrations. Today, the church is reaching out to meet human needs under the ministry of its current pastor.

Harris Memorial Church is located in Harrison Township. The population of this Township is 26,303 people. There is a good mixture of housing, business, industry, shopping and park facilities. There are 800 businesses operating in the township, most of which are service and retail oriented. This means that the residents find that shopping and everyday errands can be accomplished quickly because the businesses are conveniently located. The township's government has created a supportive environment for local businesses through the department of economic development. There is room for growth in Harrison Township; sites are available for residential, commercial and industrial development. The township has good parks and playgrounds that offer perfect settings for large family gatherings, or company picnics; there are nature walks also. Geographically,

the township covers 6.276 square miles in northern Montgomery County, just north of Dayton Ohio.[8]

There are four correctional institutions within 50 miles of the church. The first is Dayton Correctional Institute in Dayton Ohio. Second is Warren Correctional Institution in Lebanon Ohio. Third is Lebanon Correctional Institution in Lebanon Ohio. Fourth is the London Correctional Institution, London Ohio.

> During the year 2001 there were 19,721 new persons incarcerated in the state of Ohio, more than half of those in state confinement were persons of African Descent. Of the 19,721, inmates 17,334 are males and 2,387 are female. Of the male group 10,482 were African American with 8,886 whites. The rest of the inmate population breaks down in the following ways White Hispanic 256, Black Hispanic 74, Native American 11, Asian 8, and other 6. Of these numbers Montgomery County remanded 994 persons into state custody. Neighboring Hamilton County remanded 1,239 persons. The activity that sent these persons into state custody break down as follows: Crimes against the person, which may or may not include sex offenses 4,752, sexual offenses 1,239, burglary offenses 1,505, miscellaneous property offenses 3,343 but the majority of the newly incarcerated people are there for drug offenses.[9]

The state has so many persons locked up that they are now building new prisons to relieve the pressure of over-crowding. Ohio now ranks fourth in the nation at new prison construction.[10] A study of the effectiveness of correctional programming stated,

> "The results of this study indicate that the majority of research studies that evaluated prison programming support the hypothesis that inmate participation in occupational and educational programs leads to reduction in recidivism and an increase in employment opportunities, as shown in the following table.

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http://www.hawaii.adu/hivandaids/ohio/ORCLMonthlyFact_Sheets_March_2005.pdf Accessed 11/19/07

[8] http//www.dr.state.oh.us/web/Reports/ FactSheet/September % 202007.pdf

[9] Ibid.

[10] Greg Wright, *Gannett News Service Ohio No. 4 in prison construction But Thigh budget, fewer inmates force closings* http: www.enquirer.com/editions/2004/04/29 /loc_prisons29.html Accessed 9/18/07

1. Study found that 9 of 13 participants of occupational programs were less likely to recidivate and 5 of 7 participants were more likely to be employed after release.

2. Pre- College Education (Elementary, Secondary and G.E.D. Programs) 9 of 14 studies found participants were likely to recidivate and 3 of 4 studies found participants more likely to be employed after release.

3. College-Level Education 10 – 14 studies found an inverse relationship between college education and recidivism. 3 of 3 studies found participants more likely to be employed after release.[11]

Jessie Jackson stated on the campaign trail during the 2004 Presidential campaign in Dayton Ohio: "It is better to invest in head start, daycare and quality education on the front side of life then well-fare and jail care on the back side of life."[12]This study reveals that there is a relationship between quality education and incarceration and recidivism.

Jawanza Kunjufu in volume 1 of his work *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*, published in 1982 now gives an update in Volume 2 of this work. Kunjufu writes:

> Since I first released Volume I in1982, the conspiracy has become worse. We have a greater number of African American males being placed in special education classes, dropping out of school, selling drugs, making babies, involved in criminal activities and being incarcerated.[13]

This indictment reveals that we are confronted by a problem that was designed specifically for the African American male population. The issue of education is very

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[11] Office of the Inspector General Report No. 04 – 16 The Federal Bureau of Prisons Inmate Release Preparation and Transitional Reentry Program March 2004 http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/reports/BOP/a0416/intro.htm, Accessed [ADD DATE.].

[12] Ibid.

[13] Jawanza Kunjufu, *Countering The Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys volume 11* (Chicago, Illinois: African American Images, 1986), iv.

important as it relates to job opportunities. There are two Public School systems in Harrison Township, Northridge and Dayton. Northridge District Schools include Morrison Elementary School, Timber Lane Elementary School, Grafton Kennedy Elementary, Esther Dennis Middle School and Northridge High School. Dayton Public School District includes Los Elementary School, Valerie Elementary School, Meadowdale Elementary School and Meadowdale High School. The Northridge District students had problems with the proficiency test. In grades 3 through 7, less then 40% of the students were proficient.[14] Dayton Schools did no better with test scores on average in line with the Northridge district. Seniors who graduated and took the SAT test scored lower when compared to their counterparts in other parts of the state, with average scores of 515 on the verbal section and 501 on the math section of the test. Only 22% of the eligible seniors took the test.

Demographically, the congregation breaks down in this manner: the mid and senior adult population starts at 36 years of age and makes up 70% of the total population. 40% of this group is between the ages of 35-60, with 40% of them being male and 60% of them being female. 60% of this senior to adult population is between the ages of 61–103 years of age, with 80% of them being female and 20% of them being male.[15] Collectively, this age group is composed of 30% male and 40% female. The young adult population ranges between the ages 18-35 and makes up 10% of the church's total population with 70% of this population being female and 30% being male. The youth population ranges between the ages12–17 and accounts for 13% of the congregation's

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[14] Harrison Township Home page http://www.harrisontownship.org/assessed 9/18/07,

[15] Demographic Analysis by the Writer 8/06

total population with 60% of this group being female and 40% being male. The children's population ranges from infants to age12 and makes up 7% of the total church population; this group is 60% female and 40% male.

Harris Memorial Church is 97% African American and 3% Caucasian. The demographic educational levels indicate that 85% of the members have completed some level of formal education. 50% of the members have completed high school only, 20% have completed junior college, 10% have completed their baccalaureate degree, and 5% have completed or are in the process of completing Masters Degrees and above. The remaining 15% of the total membership is either too young to attend school or have not completed their formative years of education.

The personality of this congregation as a whole is warm, friendly and outgoing. We carry a reported membership of 315 persons. Historically, the church had three factions that were very contentious. Before my arrival, the tension was so severe between these factions that it led half of the membership to leave the church. Two men and three women who are related to the Rev. Emmaus Fitten head the most influential family in our church. They themselves, along with their deceased family members, were also charter members of Harris Memorial Church. These two men and three women each have five or more grown children and a large number of grandchildren, which gives them great influence. The last pastor encountered problems with this family who were in conflict with one another. One family supported the pastor and the other family fought the pastor's program. The former pastor tried to stop the battle between these families, but the preacher himself was drawn into the battle. He was unsuccessful in bringing harmony. By the end of his tenure at the church, there were less then 30 people attending

service regularly. The congregation was in crisis due to the cost of operation and mortgage payments.

The speaker experienced the transformative power of God during the period of his brother Maurice's murder. The police captured Maurice's killer and the writer had every intention of taking the murderer's life. The writer set himself in a position to get to that young boy in the courtroom. However, just as the writer was prepared to stab the murderer, this young 16 year-old kid turned around in an effort to get some visual support from his family members and friends. This writer was seated in the midst of the murderer's family on the front row, so that he could leap between the deputies who were guarding the murderer. The writer went unnoticed because he did not look like his brother. Maurice was very tall with light brown skin; the, writer however, was short, dark, and very youthful looking. Because the writer did not spend much time in that community, the young boy, his family, nor friends knew who the writer was. In fact, he later discovered that the murderer's family thought that the writer was one of his many friends from school. So, there the writer was less than eight feet from Maurice's murderer, and he was like a cobra coiled ready to strike his prey without warning. However, when that kid turned and faced him, their eyes locked for a brief moment. In those few seconds, God did something in the writer that he has never been able to explain. Before that moment, the writer had been short tempered, mean, and loved to fight. But at that moment, it was as if God opened his heart and soul and drained all of the meanness and ill temper out of him. The writer left that courtroom in tears and a different person. He went to that hearing with a heart full of a murderer's intent, but the writer left the halls of justice feeling sorry for his brother's killer. The writer became a

more compassionate person in the one brief moment that his eyes met with his brother's killer. He saw in his eyes the greatest tragedy, for he represented the children in that community who were seemingly living in a hopeless ghetto. They were playing and fighting on grassless playgrounds and asphalt. The writer left that courtroom determined to make a difference in the lives of the children in that community. He founded his first church, Burton Temple C.M.E. Church, on the very spot where his brother died. He had to learn how to confront evil without becoming confrontational and without letting others think that he was out for justice.

He labored in the community for 13 years and made a positive difference in the lives of the people of that neighborhood.

Every bishop who had been assigned to the Second Episcopal District since his time in Indianapolis has assigned him to churches that were in crisis. Consequently, the writer has earned a reputation for being able to deal effectively with difficult people without compromising his principles. He has the temperament and interpersonal communication skills to get along with difficult people. The writer has found ways of gaining everyone's respect.

When the writer received the appointment to serve at Harris Memorial Church, he knew that it would be a challenge because there were only a handful of people who attended church. He knew some of the members of the congregation from the annual meetings of the church. The writer had an idea of some of the things that he wanted to do at Harris Memorial. However, to his surprise, some of the people who he thought would be his greatest supporters were no longer members of Harris Memorial. He was disappointed, but the writer knew that God had sent him to Harris Memorial Church for a

specific purpose. He ministered to the people who remained faithful to the church. It did not take him long to identify the factions that were at work within the church. They were in conflict with the past pastor and some persons were waiting to show him that they were the unofficial pastors of the church. Notwithstanding, the writer was determined to love them and to treat all of the members with mutual respect and kindness. He wanted to show them that he wanted to serve them and be their pastor; most of all, the writer wanted to love and care for each member of the congregation without respect of persons. He also was not going to take sides and invest his emotions in their personal fights. They needed to know that he was an independent thinker and that no one would make his decisions. The writer wanted them to know that he was a fair person with the love of God in his heart.

The writer eventually had to make decisions that were unpopular with his Steward board, but they learned that he was capable of making difficult decisions that might be unpopular. They also discovered that he was patient and able to stand the weight of their disappointments and frustrations without becoming angry. Consequently, the church is "off life support" and on its way to renewed health. The writer still listens to their concerns, even though some may feel otherwise. He listens and responds appropriately. The writer has also noticed a change in the attitude of the competing factions who were at the root of so many leaving the church. After eight years of service at Harris Memorial, the members are beginning to cooperate and love one another. More importantly, the people are following the writer as he follows God.

He would like to help the church re-engage in the life of the community so that it can fulfill its social responsibilities and confront the problems that trouble the neighbors.

He wants the congregation to confront injustices and to influence those city leaders who make the decisions that effect the entire community. One of the writer's tasks will be to lead Harris Memorial Church into social activism and political engagement. The church has started this process with the development of a prison ministry team. This team has access to three correctional institutions: Lebanon Correctional Institution in Lebanon, Ohio, Warren Correctional Institution, Lebanon, Ohio, and Dayton, Correctional Institution, Dayton Ohio. This ministry was started to deal with the very real fact that these institutions are filled with African American men who at some time are going to be released and will be returning to our community. It is the writer's hope that the church's involvement with the inmates during their incarceration will have a positive impact in their rehabilitation. The prison ministry has established a new food bank that serves thirty families every two weeks. The church is in the process of establishing a tutorial program to help the students in our community with the required test needed to graduate high school. Students who fail these tests will have great difficulty entering college. The absence of a quality education means poor job opportunity and limited ability to escape poverty.

It is clear that there are major problems confronting the African American communities across this nation with a staggering number of young African Americans behind the walls of the Penal System. At this point, the project's scope is limited to assess the attitude of the community using a local congregation that is composed of persons from every segment of the local community. The multitude of other issues that remain may be alluded to, but only in passing, and will not be the focus of this project.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART

This project was birthed out of the pain of four families involved with the death of two men who were related to members of the Harris Memorial CME Church. Two of the families were related to two homicide victims who died during the course of six months; and the other two families were related to two recently released ex-offenders who pulled the triggers in the killings. Later, the church received an appeal to assist in giving Christmas gifts to the children of prisoners through the Angel Tree project. As this project was started, this writer was stunned that no one else had undertaken this topic as an academic project for the church. An exhaustive analysis of other writers who shared the writer's concerns about the exploding number of men and women trapped in a vicious cycle of crime, release and re-incarceration revealed some insights that were very revealing. Erik Eckholm's article in *The New York Times* on March 20, 2006, suggested that the conditions of the present generation of young Black males are in a very dire condition due to the fact that there is a large and growing number of poorly educated black males who are even more estranged from the main culture in the United States[1] They are disconnected from the mainstream of society due to lack of education, cultural trends and the social climate of this age. He also suggests that this problem is exceptionally high in the urban centers of America where finishing high school is the exception rather than the rule, productive jobs where a person can earn enough money to

[1] Erik Eckholm, "Plight Deepens for Black Men, Studies Warn," http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/20/national/20blackmen.htmlr=1sex=1143781200senc022c92f71081ecce &e1=5070&oref=slogan Accessed 11/19/07.

support a family are scarce and the few jobs that exist are being filled with illegal immigrants.[2] Thus, companies favor employing white males and females over black males. This vacuum of opportunities places those released in a "no win situation." In January 2006, facts documented by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction revealed that there are thirty-two penal institutions in the state. Twenty-nine of these institutions are for the male population, with three institutions designed to hold 35,429 beds.[3] The report further reveals that there are two privately operated institutions for males.

> In the calendar year 2004, there were 28,177 persons returned home. Of that number 15,513 persons were under some form of judicial control. In 2004 there were also 2,873 persons returned to prison for parole violation. In 2004 the total prison population was 44,974. The average age per inmate was 35.16 years of age with average stay in prison being 2.74 years. The budget for the year 2006 was $1,688,660,530 and average cost per inmate of $23,011.03.

If these same resources were used to fund head start, day care and a quality, primary and secondary education for the children of the state, the writer believes it would create a drop in the crime rate.

In "Crime & Punishment: How the U.S. Prison System Makes Minority Communities Pay Prison Policy Initiative" by Zachary R. Dowdy, the author suggests that there is a negative political and economic impact for minority communities.[4] He starts his article by examining the impact of the disfranchisement of 400,000 ex-offenders

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction *January 2006 Facts.* http://drc.state.Oh.us/web/reports/factsheet/, pdr. Accessed, January 20, 2006.

[4] Zachary R. Dowdy, "Crime & Punishment How the U.S. Prison System Makes Minority Communities Pay Prison Policy Initiative," *The New Crisis Magazine* (July/August 2002), Available at http://prisonpolicy.org/news/crisis_July2002.shtml Accessed February 19, 2006.

who would have swung the election from the closest vote in U.S. history to a win for former Vice President Gore.[5] He examines how prison construction in the 1990s became attractive to poor white towns as a means of escaping economic misery by offering good paying jobs to these willing communities.[6] These constructions also had the unintended effect of shifting federal funds from poor minority intercity communities that are mostly Democratic to poor white towns that are mostly Republican. This shift also has a political effect through the census established by the federal government in 1790 for the articulated purpose of reapportionment and redrawing congressional district lines. [7] In theory, state legislators are supposed to redraw the lines after each census to create congressional district equality. The purpose was to guarantee the constitutional rights of one person, one vote—the maxim that everyone's votes must be equal. In theory that sounded good, but historically this theory had a flaw. Those held as slaves in the southern colonies were not considered equal to whites and had no basic human rights that whites had to respect.

John Hope Franklin suggested that the northern colonies' population outnumbered the south, but the south had a high slave population. With that in mind, a deal was made that would consider a slave as 3/5th human for the purpose of the census, yet they could not participate in the voting process. [8] As the writer read Dowdy, he seems to suggest that the modern prison system set-up compounded figures in rural white communities because

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom A History of African Americans,* 7th ed. (New York: McGraw- Hill, 1994), 82-89.

of the way the census counts prisoners as residents of the county in which they are incarcerated. This practice weakens the voting strength of their home communities and causes a shift in the congressional lines. It also affects the allocation of federal funds, so that minority communities experience an adverse impact. When considering the effect experienced by the prisoners and communities in the thirteen states that disenfranchise felons, the community suffers politically and economically and the individual offender in essence is returned to slavery. The average offender is released from prison after 3 1/2 years. Prior to their conviction, they could vote, get a job according to their ability, rent an apartment in a federal housing complex, get student loans, and go to college, even if they had a prior conviction if it was not drug related. After conviction, most of these privileges ended, plus they carry the stigma of being a felon.

The Urban Institute of Washington, D.C. defines re-entry as the process of leaving an adult correctional institution and returning to society.[9] They limited the scope of their report to those sentenced to serve in state correctional institutions for serious offenses so that they might focus on persons who are eligible for state correctional programs and managed by the state correctional, parole and felony probation systems after release. The Urban Institute launched "Returning Home: Understanding the challenges of Prisoner Reentry," as a multi-state research project in Maryland, Illinois, Ohio, and Texas. The purpose of this study was to help deepen the understanding of the reentry experiences of returning prisoners, their families, and their respective communities. The researcher used interviews with male prisoners before and after their

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[9] Christy Visher, Baer Demelza, and Rebecca Naser, *Ohio Prisoners' Reflection on Returning Home* Urban Institute (January 2006); http://www, urban.org/ uploaded pdf/31272_ohio_prisoners.pdf, Accessed February 4, 2006.

release from the state correctional institution and focus groups with residents in the neighborhoods to which many prisoners were returning. They interviewed reentry policymakers and practitioners. They also reviewed state laws and policies for overall content.

The state of Ohio's prison population growth mirrored the national level for almost two decades between 1982 and 1998.[10] The population grew from 17,147 to 48, 172. The Ohio prison population almost tripled. After a three-year decline between 1998-2000, the prison population increased by less then one percent in 2001-2004 to reach 44,082 by 2004. Ohio had the seventh largest prison population in the United States and has the 25th largest incarceration rate, with 391 prisoners per 100,000 residents.[11] This raised the question in the writer's mind about the high growth rate in this system. What has caused this high rate of growth? The researcher did not leave the public in the dark concerning this question. The increase in growth can be traced to more admission and longer lengths of stay. The dramatic increases of admission between 1987-1992 were the result of a dramatic rise in new commitments for drug offenses, as well as increases in serious violent crimes. Generally, this state's release patterns reflect the national admission trends over the past two decades. Since 2002, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction has been working to develop a more holistic and systematic approach. The portion of the study available for this document was a study of 22% of Ohio prisoners returning to Cuyahoga County.[12] Seventy-five percent of those retuning to Cuyahoga County are returning to Cleveland. They found that most prisoners returning to

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

the Cleveland area have extensive criminal histories, with 62% having served more than one prison term and 39% percent most recently serving time because of a supervision violation.[13] One-third of prisoners participated in classes or training, with almost one in seven earning a GED. About two-thirds of prisoners were legally employed before their prison term, but 53% percent also reported income from illegal sources, with only twenty-two percent having jobs lined up after their release. The report found three in four prisoners, 72% percent, reported illegal drug use before they were incarcerated (mostly marijuana and cocaine); yet 50% percent of the respondents did not participate in any substance abuse programs while incarcerated. The writer was a teenage alcoholic and understands experientially the difficulties that exist on the other side of physical addiction, the emotional and psychological dependency that is commonly called "having a monkey on your back" this form of addiction is just as behavior controlling as physical addiction under the right circumstances and a person may revert to the old familiar pattern of coping when in pain or confronted by failure or frustration. The numbers in this report may be important indicators of future behavior and must not be ignored by the church.

The majority of prisoners in this study felt close to their families during their stay in the institution. Seventy percent expected to live with family members after their release and almost half expect that their families would be a source of financial support. Most of the men interviewed before release were very optimistic about their future, Seventy-seven percent said "that it would be easy to stay out of prison and avoid a parole

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[13] Ibid.

violation (among those who expected to be on parole), yet most also said that they would need help with job training/ education, counseling, and financial assistance."

Richard Rosenfeld Professor and Ph.D., Program Director at the University of Missouri at St. Louis (who specializes in violent crime, crime statistics, and crime control policy) has a current research project that focuses on explaining U.S. crime trends. In a press interview covered by the Associated Press, Dr. Rosenfeld stated,

> Out of the 1600 prisoners released every day, over half of them will end up back behind bars within three years." The national council says that if people received more help when they are released the numbers would diminish. That period right after release is riskiest for the inmate and the community. That is when prisoners are more likely to commit new crimes.[14]

All indicators point to the fact that the prison population has tripled over the last decade. Some contributing factors are the get-tough on crime movement, which means longer sentences for violent crimes. Another contributing element is the nation's war on drugs; this war affects poor minority community members disproportionately. Many have little or no job skills and cannot get meaningful employment except at fast food venders who pay minimal wages. These wages are not large enough to support a family without another source of income. This makes the illegal drug markets offer of large sums of money very attractive to unemployable youth. While there are risks associated with selling drugs, many unemployable youth view it as a viable way to get rich or die trying.

In *Religion and the Development of the American Penal System*, Andrew Skotnick states that there is a correlation between religion and the attitude of society:

> It became clear that the religious community itself had substantially affected the development that saw the post revolutionary evangelical emphasis on conversion translated into the first penitentiaries. In the early nineteenth century, a confident

[14] Law and Justice, Editorial Staff *Jet*. 112 no. 6 (August 13, 2007): 16.

> and committed evangelical Protestantism dominated the American religious economy. It was schooled in the great awakening of the1740s, and was undergoing renewed period of revival that would culminate in another great awakening in the 1820s. The roots of this revival mentality were deeply significant permutations within Calvinism, spearheaded by groups seeking to replace the arbitrariness of divine judgment, and God's "secret will," with a more rational and public theology centered in the covenant.[15]

If Skotnick's theory is correct, there should be other examples of its effect in history. John Hope Franklin writes, "Vice President George Bush was a formidable candidate made more so by incumbency and by his long service in public life."[16] Franklin Further states during the election campaign that Bush cultivated the upper-class suburban voters and conservatives by accusing Dukakis of being soft on crime. This example became the central feature of the Republican strategy played daily on televised advertisements accusing Dukakis of granting a parole to a black felon named Willie Horton, who then committed another serious felony.[17] The nightly airing of the political ad of the revolving gate outside of a prison with black and brown felons going in and out of prison was appealing to the suburban communities. This political ploy was effective because of their demographics and fears. This campaign issue was effective enough to create a climate where rehabilitation was replaced by warehousing. The Bush team efforts proved to be successful at the ballot box, but devastating to the rehabilitation movement. John Hope Franklin and Alfred Moss Jr. who recorded the event above are two great emancipative writers whom this writer has grown to love. Their collected

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[15] Andrew Skotnick, *Religion and the Development of the American Penal System* (Lanham MD: University Press, 2000), 2.

[16] John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom A History of African Americans*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw- Hill, 1994), 545.

[17] Ibid.

works are some of the most inspiring writings, next to the word of God, it has been the writer's privilege to read.

As the writer surveyed the catalogues in the libraries of Dayton, he discovered that there was very little written concerning the involvement of a local church assisting ex-offenders when they return home. It was encouraging to find several local churches involved in prison ministry. But to the writer's dismay, only the nation of Islam was involved in a highly visual way in helping their converts after they are released from institutions. Yet, very little is written about their efforts.

Harris Memorial has been active in prison ministry for the past eight years and the question before the church and this writer is: How can we equip local churches to be more effective in helping persons recently released from prison? It is hoped that this effort will act as a catalyst for emancipator literature and action. The writer seeks to empower people to become Ambassadors of Christ[18] who will go into the entire world (Matthew 28:19) with the life-giving, liberating word of God.

James Cone undertook understanding the meaning of the black revolution in the sixties. Cone was among the first theologians to give formal and systematic expression to the meaning of black religion and to place it in the context of the freedom struggle for black equality.[19] Cone states:

> Theology is not universal language about God. Rather, it is human speech informed historical and theological tradition, and written for particular times and places. Theology is contextual languish—that is, defined by the human situation that gives birth to it. Therefore, when one read a theological textbook, it is important to

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[18] 2 Cor. 5:20

[19] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book, 1990), xi.

> note the year of its publication, the audience for whom it was written, and the issues the author felt compelled to address[20]

The writer agrees with Cone. This means that he had to sit down and look at the project from a theological perspective. The writer believes that he has to view the issues confronting the population within the time they live and the circumstances they have to face. The theological issues underlying this project require that the researcher understand the attitudes of the victimized community. Andrew Sung Park has led the way in presenting the theology of the victim.[21] Park promotes the Korean concept of Han, while quoting a piece from Hak Hyun Young lecture at Union Theological Seminary on April, 11 1982:

> Han is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustice suffered a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of acute pain of sorrow in one's guts and bowels making the whole body writhe and wiggle, and an obstinate urge to take "revenge" and to right the wrong all these combined.[22]

Park states that "Han is the void of grief that the suffering innocent experiences."[23] Park further suggests this void is not just emptiness but an abyss filled with agony; it is a dark night of grief. He further suggests that this intense grief swallows all other agendas of life. The fact that Han is voiceless parallels clearly to the life of those who are powerless, marginalized and voiceless. Park writes:

> Social injustice, political repression, economic exploitation, cultural contempt, and war, all of which affect the downtrodden as a whole, raise the collective Han. When the oppressed undergo suffering over several generations without release, they develop

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Andrew Sung Park, *Racial Conflict & Healing An Asian- American Theological Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1996), 9.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

> collective unconscious Han and transmit it to their posterity. In Jungian terms, this is something similar to the "collective unconscious." Collective unconscious Han is, however, different from Jung's. For Jung the collective unconscious is more like an atmosphere in which we live than something that is found with in us.[24]

Using Park's definition and method of understanding the mindset of the victimized community is most useful, especially in this project. The writer has experienced the murder of his eighteen-year-old brother on his birthday by a sixteen-year-old youth over a cigarette. This act filled him with a consuming rage that blotted out his reason and common sense. So much so that he went to the young man's arraignment hearing the next day armed with a ten-inch knife; he went to that hearing to kill his brother's murderer. Just as the writer got ready to strike, the young man turned and looked into his eyes. The writer reports that God did something for him in that momentary glance that he still has great difficulty explaining. The writer's rage was turned into compassion for his brother's killer; he left that court a changed man. This gave the writer an understanding of Park's phase "intense grief that swallows up all other agendas of life."[25] This project's goal is to assess the community's attitude towards ex-offenders. Also, the goal is to help a community recognize the magnitude of the problems it will face unless it gets involved in helping ex-offenders have a healthy reentry into the community (i.e., family, work, housing and the church). This project seeks to remind the Church that it is God's redemptive community with a mandate to forgive other as each congregant seeks to be forgiven.

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[24] Park , *Racial Conflict & Healing* , 9.

[25] Ibid.

This writer was very surprised that no one in the faith community had undertaken a project even in a limited fashion of assisting ex-offenders when they return home to have a healthy start. This writer found many state agencies, some think tanks and many social justice groups addressing the cause and effect issues. But this writer found no written record of a local church or group of churches seeking to have an impact on the issues confronting those returning home. Some of this lack of material is systemic and is due to institution rules, such as that the church cannot evangelize the institution for new congregants. But most of the problems persist because of the church's lack of knowledge on how to work effectively with the institution and the frustration that it engenders. It is my hope that this document will be the first of many projects that will explore the ways the church can have a direct and positive impact upon those returning home.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The story of Moses as recorded in the Exodus narrative illustrates the role that the community and the family play in the development of leaders. Like the Hebrews of the Old Testament, African Americans have sought prophetic leaders to challenge the systems of injustice and urge those who command political and economic power to show compassion to the downtrodden. Historically, in the African American community, the church and the family are likened to the womb from which great leaders have been birthed. Even now, this 21st century society needs to hear from a prophetic voice that will be a brazen trumpet of liberation and compassion for the hungry, sick, and imprisoned.

God has often called ordinary people to champion the causes of equality. Indeed, in the Exodus narrative, Moses was educated as an Egyptian socialite and celebrated as one of the members of the royal family of Egypt. But Moses himself was the son of a Hebrew slave and a member of the disenfranchised and dispossessed of Egyptian society. He was from the lineage of those thought to be unworthy, unwanted, and uneducated. Ethnically, he was a Hebrew slave, but culturally, he was an Egyptian prince. Both cultures were diametrically opposed in their theological perspectives, but this paradoxical situation became the incubator that nurtured Moses and prepared him for ministry and leadership. Arguably, none of the other Egyptian princes or Hebrew slaves thought that the Hebrews' deliverer would be the stuttering Moses.[1] Yet, the Bible records him among

[1] Exodus 4:10

those listed in its hall of fame.[2] Moses simple but profound message "Let my people go"[3] was for the Hebrews what Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream Speech" was for the African Americans of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

The scripture indicates that all Hebrew male babies were to be killed and only the female babies were allowed to live. [4] However, Moses was spared because the two Hebrew midwives Spiphrah and Puah "feared God and felt compelled by that love of God and compassion for the children, to disobey the king's commands, this act saved the men children alive one of whom was their promised redeemer, Moses."[5] Love compelled Moses' parents at great personal risk to hide their son from the murderous regime of Pharaoh until they could no longer keep him safe. It was in the midst of that crisis moment that his mother devised a plan that would give her baby a chance for survival. Baby Moses was placed inside of a bulrush basket pitched with tar. He then was put into the rushing waters of the Nile River in hopes that he might be rescued from these waters of uncertainty. As fate would have it, Pharaoh's daughter saved him. Ironically, this baby was nursed by his biological mother, cared for by his older sister, and reared as a prince of Egypt.

The names of Moses' father and mother are not mentioned in the narrative. [6] Perhaps they remain anonymous to underscore that there was nothing unique or exemplary about this particular family. Maybe it highlights that the family unit extends

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[2] Hebrews 11: 24-28

[3] Exodus 8:1

[4] Exodus 1:16

[5] Exodus 2: 17

[6] Exodus 2: 7-12

beyond the boarders of biological identification and social location. Indeed, Moses' families were of both Egyptian and Hebrew ethnicities. This pericope reveals that the early formative years of Moses' time with both sides of his family had a profound impact on his cultural sensitivities. It is likely that the Hebrew side of Moses' family instilled in him his true knowledge of his identity, while his Egyptian mother constructed for him a distorted family identity. Notwithstanding both influences, the shaping of his character was obviously a result of his Hebrew family who spent quality time with him in his formative years. Perhaps they reminded him that although he lived in the palace, he was still a Hebrew. The Hebrew family may have taught him the imperative of honoring YHWH with ones' total being. Armed with this knowledge, Moses was able to have a balanced life. Indeed, he was able to move from palace to slave quarters with ease. However, this movement was not without tension. The Exodus narrative reveals that on one of his trips to the quarters, he observed the brutality of Egyptian slavery and attempted to stop an act of violence against a Hebrew. Moses' efforts to intercede for the oppressed resulted in him murdering an Egyptian, thus marking the end of his time as one of the princes of Egypt.[7] Although Moses' parents feared God and he enjoyed all the privileges of being in Pharaoh's palace, yet religion and privilege did not prevent him from killing a man and burying him in the sand.

Moses fled Egypt as a fugitive and spent the next forty years of his life on the backside of the desert as Jethro's son-in-law and the keeper of his sheep.[8] It was while he labored at this lonely job that God called him to leadership. The book of Exodus indicates

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[7] Exodus 2: 11-15

[8] Exodus 3: 1 –4:19

that God called Moses to confront a governmental system that justified the immorality of slavery and idolatry. Moses' return to Egypt to confront his adopted family. From their view, Moses' actions were a betrayal of their values and treason to his people. His Hebrew family however viewed Moses' action differently; they saw him as a freedom fighter and the deliverer sent by God.

Just as Moses led the Hebrews, God has used various people and religious institutions to advance the causes of equality for African Americans. John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss Jr. were moved to write a more inclusive history that told the story of a people who suffered under the most oppressive and repressive system of slavery recorded.

> I have made a conscious effort to write the history of the Negro in America with due regard for the forces at work which have affected his development. This has involved a continuous recognition of the mainstream of American history and the relationship of the Negro to it. It has been necessary, therefore, to a considerable extent, to retell the story of the evolution of the people of the United States in order to place the Negro in his proper relationship and perspective. To have proceeded otherwise would have been to ignore the indisputable fact that historical forces are all-pervasive and cut through the most rigid barriers of race and caste. It would have been impossible to trace the history of the Negro in America without it remaining sensitive to the main currents in the emergence of American Civilization.[9]

In this brief statement, Dr. Franklin shares the true story of the struggle for social justice and political action of the African Diaspora in America. These persons of African descent have been dehumanized by the design of the United States Constitution as three-fifths human for the purpose of representation and taxation. Yet John Hope Franklin also suggests that the writers of that great document wrote in an atmosphere where people like

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[9] Franklin and Moss Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, xxxi.

John Woolman, a New Jersey Quaker, and Anthony Benezet, a Philadelphia Huguenot, had already begun their anti-slavery work in the middle colonies. Others like Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush had put the weight of their personal capital behind the fight to free the slaves. [10] "There was no other public denunciation of the institution of slavery by any outstanding political leaders in the colonists." John Hope Franklin writes:

> The resurrection of the hated navigation act and the imposition of new regulation like the sugar act of 1764 brought forth eloquent defenses of the position of the colonists. One act of Parliament had, as James Otis declared, "set people thinking in six months more than they had done in their whole lives before" They began to offer their dual role as oppressed and oppressor. Almost overnight the grave but quiet efforts of Benezet and Woolman bore fruit. As some colonial leaders began to denounce not only England's New Imperial Policy but slavery and the slave trade as well.[11]

Franklin contributed to the amelioration of the African American experience by helping the students of American History see that this history is incomplete without acknowledging the contribution of the African American Slave. Slaves were viewed by Europeans as less than human, so they could be mistreated, abused and banished from the pages of their historical text as though socially non-existent, and politically impotent. John Hope Franklin's historical work proved the error of this thinking and gave pride and purpose to a race that had been stripped of their history and culture and replaced feelings of worthlessness with dignity and self worth.

As we study history, we are amazed at the way the slave culture caused people to violate their own values. Franklin writes:

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[10] Ibid., 60.

[11] Ibid., 69.

> Thomas Jefferson wrote "A Summary View of the Rights of British America" in which he said that the abolition of slavery was the great object of desire in the colonies, but that it had become increasingly difficult because Britain had consistently blocked all colonial efforts to put an end to the slave trade.[12]

This statement was surprising, for history informs us that Jefferson had slaves whom he did not manumit at his death. A deeper study of Jefferson's writings reveals a man of principles. An example of these principles is revealed in the formulation of a general political philosophy that he developed to justify the drastic steps the colonists were taking. This statement had the general support and acceptance of the colonists' proposition that "all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights,—life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." They could accept Jefferson's statement, but when he levels the very harsh and uncompromising charges against the King below, their acceptance changed and John Adams reported that the comments were stricken from the document:

> He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most scared rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the Christian king of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where men should be brought and sold, He has prostituted his negative [veto] for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce; and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting these very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he deprived them, by murdering the people upon whom he also obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the liberties of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the lives of another. These charges, described by John Adams as the "vehement philippic against

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[12] Ibid., 70.

> Negro slavery," were unacceptable to the southern delegation at the Continental congress and were stricken from the document.[13]

As thoughts are given to the role of prophetic voices in ages past, it can be seen throughout history that there have been a host of voices that have dared to speak truth to power. In no area was this quest for liberation more determined than in the area of religion. In the post-Revolutionary War era, people of African descent were determined that they would secure freedom. Franklin suggested that in the late 1700s, the church in America had to make a decision about its loyalty to Europe or the colonies. Many insisted upon complete integration of Blacks into the religious life of the nation and spearheaded the attack against the institution of slavery. Franklin writes:

> In 1784, for example, the Methodist declared that slavery was contrary to the golden Law of God and gave their members twelve months to liberate their slaves. This position proved somewhat premature, however, as Virginia and other Southern states forced a suspension of the resolution. In 1789 the Baptists said that slavery was a violent depredation of the rights of nature and inconsistent with a republican government. Gradually, however, they were forced to recede from this position. After the war many churches accepted blacks, but whites were afraid that too liberal a policy would be disastrous to the effective control of slavery. Black ministers and church officials, it was thought, would exercise too much authority over their communicants and would perhaps cause trouble on the plantation.[14]

Franklin suggests that the American church was having difficulties dealing with issues concerning church and state and did not have the time to devote to the problems of Blacks. A great many Anglican clergy were loyal to the King of England; this led many Americans to insist upon church disestablishment. Every denomination, except Roman Catholicism, was busy organizing a wing of the church that would operate independently

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[13] Ibid., 71.

[14] Ibid., 100.

of their European sponsors. Even the Catholics were to be controlled by a special Perfect Apostolic. Franklin states,

> These preoccupations tended to crowd out the problem of blacks off the church scene and were in part the cause of the establishment racially separate churches.[15]

This history reveals that the relationship of Africans in the colonies was a source of great tension that almost aborted the birth of this nation until the 3/5 human compromise was reached. This compromise set into law the ownership of Africans simply because of the color of their skin to be bought and sold, used or abused like any piece of property. Yet for the purpose of representation in the legislative branch of government, the states counted them as 3/5th human. For all intents and purposes, ex-offenders are reduced in ability to a status no higher than a slave. In slavery, work was the order of the day for everyone; ex-offenders have great difficulty getting meaningful employment.

> Ex-offenders cannot vote in eight states—Alabama, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nevada, Virginia, and Wyoming permanently bar ex-felons from voting without exception. Maryland and Arizona permanently disenfranchise those convicted of a second felony, and Tennessee and Washington State permanently bar from voting felons convicted before 1986 and 1984, respectively, according to the sentencing project, a criminal justice think tank in Washington, D.C. Other states restored voting rights upon completion of sentences or parole. Some other states had to wait until they had fully paid their debt to society through some required application process.[16]

Franklin suggests that in the period after the revolutionary war, Black Baptist churches began to spring up all over the south, George Liele, an industrious and

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[15] Ibid., 101.

[16] Zachary R. Dowdy, "Crime& Punishment How the U.S. prison system makes minority communities pay," *The New Crisis Magazine*, July/August 2002 http://www.prisonpolicy Org/news/crisis_july2002 shtml; accessed July 2004.

resourceful black leader, founded a Baptist church in Savannah, Georgia in 1779 before he left for Jamaica. The church continued to prosper under the leadership of Andrew Bryan, his understudy, who preached to whites as well as Blacks. Franklin writes concerning this ministry:

> At the end of the war whites sought to close the church by whipping the members and imprisoning Bryan, but his benevolent master supported him, and finally Bryan's church became the nucleus for the organization of Black Baptist in Georgia. Virginia blacks organized Baptist churches at Petersburg in 1776, at Richmond in 1780, and at Williamsburg in 1785. In some of these efforts they had the cooperation of white ministers.[17]

Franklin further writes:

> In the north, free Blacks went further in establishing independent churches. Franklin states: The best example of this trend was the work of Richard Allen and his followers in Philadelphia. This prospective leader demonstrated his industry and determination by saving enough money with which to purchase his freedom from his Delaware master in 1777, the year in which he was also converted. Within a few years he was preaching and winning the favor of Bishop Asbury. In 1786 he moved to Philadelphia, where he began to hold prayer meetings for his own people. His proposal to set up a separate place of worship for blacks was opposed by whites and some blacks. It was only after the officials of St. George's Church, where he frequently preached, proposed to segregate the large numbers of blacks who came to hear him that it became clear to him and others that blacks should have a separate church. The die was cast when, on one occasion, officials pulled Allen, Absalom Jones, and William White from their knees during prayer. Allen, with the help of Jones, immediately organized the independent Free Africa Society.[18]

Allen and Jones did not continue to labor together; Absalom Jones, became the first Black Episcopal priest in 1801. Allen went on to organize and dedicate the Bethel Church in 1794. In 1799, Bishop Asbury ordained him deacon and later he was elevated

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[17] Ibid., 102.

[18] Ibid., 102.

to the status of an elder. His church became known as the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Soon branches of the AME church began to spring up in Baltimore, Wilmington, and various Pennsylvania and New Jersey towns. A number of leaders elected AME offices included Daniel Coker, Nicholson Gilliard, and Morris Brown. Franklin notes:

> The church grew in strength until by 1816 it was possible to bind the various congregations together in a formal organization. The conference chose Daniel Coker as its bishop, but he resigned and Allen was elected to fill the office.[19]

By 1820, the church had more than 6,000 members and had spread as far west as Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and as far south as Charleston, South Carolina. Only the strong opposition to Black organization created by the Denmark Vesey's insurrection of 1822 stopped the southern movement of Black Methodism until the end of the civil war, when the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was granted permission to organize at the General Conference of The Methodist Church South in 1866. This church was birthed on Dec. 16, 1870 in Jackson, Tennessee.

The White Methodists of New York had the same attitude toward their Black fellows, as did their counterparts in Philadelphia. The result of this tension was that the Black membership withdrew from the John Street Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and established the African American Episcopal Zion Church in 1796. Franklin writes:

> Leading this movement were Peter Williams, James Varick, elected the first bishop in 1822, George Collins, and Christopher Rush. They could find no one in either the Episcopal or the Methodist church who would ordain and consecrate their elders, and finally they had to do it themselves overcoming schisms within

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[19] Ibid.

> and opposition without, the church was sufficiently stable by 1822 to elect a bishop and to set up a program of expansion.[20]

Franklin suggests that this trend toward independent organizations in northern states was repeated in Baptist congregations in Philadelphia, Boston and New York. This trend of building separate houses of worship for African Americans was not consistent with the teaching of the religion that these congregations professed, but this unscriptural practice gave blacks an unusual opportunity to develop leadership. The African American community was cut off from participation in the political life of the communities in which they lived. They had limited to no educational opportunities. The Black Church moved proactively to address the urgent social and political needs of the day. The Black Church has been at the forefront of the march for social justice and political action ever since the reconstruction period, the labor movement of 1920, the Civil rights movement of the 1960s and the current crisis facing the African American community.

This Doctor of Ministry Degree in the context of Social Justice and Political action is the church striving to fulfill the Lord's command to make disciples in a world tainted with the sins of racism, sexism and classism. If the people in this society are to find liberty and a positive social change, the church must cry loudly against sin, societal indifference and injustice. The church must spare none because of political, social or economic status. The biblical scripture [21] makes it clear that the prophets must lift up their voices like a trumpet. This has been the role of those who led the battle for social justice and political action in ages past and remains the hope for generations to come.

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[20] Ibid., 103.

[21] Isaiah 58: 1

In this age of social activism under the Clinton program charitable choice and the Bush Administration Faith Based Initiative, the questions have been raised, "Can the church speak truth to power if it is feeding off the government's economic table? Is there a way for the church to fund its ministries from the government's treasure and maintain its prophetic integrity?" This question was raised with Reverend Dr. Charles J. King Jr., founder and executive director of Project One, and former presiding elder of the Cincinnati-Dayton and Indianapolis District of the Second Episcopal Region of The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Reverend King said in response to this question that it is possible to maintain one's prophetic integrity if you establish a nonprofit foundation and faithfully keep a bright line between the funds of the nonprofit organization and the local church.[22] After that dialogue with Elder King, there still remains reservations about the faith-based ministry approach of these administrations. One could not be sure what would happen if one gave negative feedback to a political or public policy position. What might be the effect on funding for the nonprofit entity? Would concern about the economic health of a social ministry make one reluctant to speak truth to power?

It is possible to take a strong positive or equally negative position on this question. Reasons suggest that the cost of a positive position on this issue may outweigh the benefits received by the local church or nonprofit organizations. It may cause the pastor of the church to be guarded in the area of prophetic ministry.

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[22] Interview with the Rev. Dr. Charles J. King Jr. March 2007 Dayton OH.

The African American Church must never lose its ability to be the moral consciousness of the community and to speak to the governing power for those not on their political agenda, the poor, the left out, and helpless.

Biblical Foundation

Ronald F. Youngblood defines prison in ancient times as "a place of forcible restraint or confinement. Most prisons of the ancient world were crude and dehumanizing."[23] The bible speaks of several types of prisons and circumstances.[24] Samson was held in manmade structures in Gaza. [25] The New Testament uses three terms translated as "prison": The cell of John the Baptist,[26] the Apostle Peter being imprisoned in a "house,"[27] and finally, Paul and Silas being thrown into a prison, place of guarding at Philippi. [28] These are just a few instances that refer to what confinement would mean according to circumstances.[29]

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[23] Ronald F. Youngblood, ed., *New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Publishing, 1995), 103.1.

[24] I Kin 22:27, Jer 41:7

[25] Jud. 6:21

[26] Matt. 11: 36

[27] Acts 12:7

[28] Acts 16:23-40

[29] Ibid., 1031.

The Jewish prisons mentioned in the New Testament were used to detain persons awaiting trial or execution.[30] This runs parallel to some of the punishment mandated in this century.

Jesus Christ showed concern for persons in prisons or bondage. In fact, part of the mission declared by Him can be found in the scripture[31] where He declares, "The spirit of the sovereign Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness the prisoners." Jesus Christ boldly advocates that prisoners were not to be in bondage indefinitely.

This project is relative to this advocacy of Jesus, and is the essence of this liberation. The question for this context is, "who is free to do what and where?" Harris Memorial will be a test model for reentry into society, in general, and into the church in particular. The author contends that this freedom or liberation of persons enables them, with the help of this ministry, to return and become more meaningful and productive members of society. Is this possible or realistic for the church? We at Harris Memorial believe we can lead churches in this type of endeavor.

It is felt that, with the renewing of the minds of the believers (called the church), it will energize the church to embrace those persons trying to reenter into society. Once believers renew their minds to the understanding that Jesus Christ is the God of second

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[30] Acts 16:23-40

[31] Isaiah 61:1

chances, we must play a part in that process. Scripture reminds the believer that, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."[32] All men with out exception

> "come short of God's glory." The tense is present: all men are coming short, that is continually coming short of God's glory. The glory of God is God's standard for man. It means his moral glory. It means his excellence, splendor, brilliance, magnificence, preeminence, dignity, majesty, and grace. It means the absolute perfection of God, the perfection of his person. It is this "glory of God" which demands that man correspond perfectly with God's will. With that in mind, first God's glory is light, perfect light. Second, His glory is purity, perfect purity. It is the highest degree of virtue and goodness, of quality and morality. It is the highest excellence of character and the perfection of being. Thirdly Glory is majesty, perfect majesty. It is the very highest degree of preeminence and magnificence, of dignity and honor, of meriting worship and praise. Fourth, glory is being perfect. It is the very highest degree of worth, quality and merit, preciousness and value. The Church will understand that there is none perfect except Jesus Christ.[33]

With that in mind prayerfully, the believers will understand that none is perfect except Jesus Christ (from a Christian perspective). One of the most important examples of freedom is seen in the Old Testament imagery in the Exodus: "God's redemption of the people of Israel from Egyptian servitude to allow God's people to become the community of God's covenant."[34]

> Throughout the Scripture there are accounts of people who spent time in some sort of prison. One account speaks of Joseph the dreamer who was the apple of his father's eye. One cannot fully appreciate his story unless one understands the family dynamics preceding his incarceration—an account that begins with his grandparents. As a symbol of his love for Joseph his father made him a coat of many colors; this coat for his brothers was a reaffirmation of their father's preference for the children of Rachel

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[32] Rom 3: 23

[33] Alpha-Omega-Ministries, Inc. *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible Volume 2* (Chattanooga: Leadership Ministries, 1998), 436-437.

[34] Ibid., 1032.

> and his lower affection for them and their mothers. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many Colors.[35]

Dr. J. Vernon Mc Gee states concerning this verse:

> Joseph should have learned his lesson in his own home. He knew that to play favorites would cause trouble in a family. His own father had favored the elder brother, and Jacob knew what it was to be discriminated against. But here he practices the very same thing. We can understand his feelings, knowing that Rachel was the wife he really loved—she was the one fine thing in his life—and Joseph is really a fine boy, and Jacob loves him dearly. While this is true, it still is not an excuse. He should not have made him that coat.[36]

James Montgomery Boise calls Joseph "a man for all seasons" and then adds:

> He was loved and hated, favored and abused, tempted and trusted, exalted and abased. Yet at no point in the one hundred, ten-year life of Joseph did he ever seem to get his eyes off God or cease to trust him. Adversity did not harden his character. Prosperity did not ruin him. He was the same in private as in public. He was a truly great man as a result, we are free to respond to and love him as perhaps no other character in the bible except the Lord Jesus Christ.[37]

Their hatred and animosity toward Joseph led them to sell him into slavery for twenty pieces of silver. He was sold to Ishmaelite traders who carried him into Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. In the book of Genesis, the Scripture states:

> 2. And the lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

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[35] Genesis 37: 3

[36] J.Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible Volume With J. Vernon McGee* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1981), 148.

[37] James Boice Montgomery, *Genesis, An Expositional Commentary, Vol. 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1987), 11.

> 3. And his masters saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.[38]

Terence E. Fretheim writes concerning this passage:

> Chapter 37 ended with the reader's being left in suspense regarding Joseph's fate. Chapter 39 picks up the story at this point. Joseph has been sold by the Ishmaelites to an otherwise unknown Egyptian name Potiphar, an official in Pharaoh, in whose home Joseph takes up residence. Now, through chapter 41, we find no reference to Joseph's home and family. This absence intensifies Joseph's isolation And may explain the emphasis placed on God's presence with him.[39]

It did not take long for Potiphar to notice that whatever Joseph put his hands on was more successful than other men. The Bible states: "And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had put into his hands"[40] Joseph was the person in the house that everyone reported to, except Potiphar and his wife. Shortly after he was placed in charge of the house, Potiphar's wife found herself attracted to this handsome man; he was irresistible, and she attempted to seduce him. Matthew Henry calls this woman's action:

> A most shameful instance of impudence and immodesty in Joseph's mistress, the shame and scandal of her sex, perfectly lost to all virtue and honor, and not to be mentioned, nor thought of, without the utmost indignation. It was well that she was an Egyptian; for we must have shared in the confusion if such had been found in Israel.[41]

Walter Brueggeman writes about this incidence:

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[38] Gen. 39: 2-3

[39] Terence E. Fretheim. *The New Interpreter's Bible Volume 1* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 609.

[40] Gen. 39:4

[41] Matthew Henry. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Hendrickson Publisher, 1991).

> In Genesis 39:7-20, Joseph has his first confrontation with the ways of the empire. He has resisted temptation from the seductive woman out of loyalty to his master and fear of God.[42]

Joseph was a man of character and resisted her advances. She lied and cried that he had attempted to rape her. In spite of his faithfulness and righteous actions, he was sent to prison.

Terence E. Fretheim writes about the reaction of Potiphar to this event:

> Genesis 39: 21-23. Potiphar became enraged by what he hears (probably for many reasons) and puts Joseph into prison—another pit (37:20)—without either facing him with the evidence or giving him an opportunity to reply to the accusation. Prison (especially the king's prison) was probably a lesser penalty than what was typical in such situations (Israelite law called for death, Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22). Joseph is an innocent victim, reduced to silence. Yet, in time he responds to the prison warden in a way similar to his response to Potiphar (vv. 4-6), with much the same effect (v. 22): The warden entrusts Joseph with responsibility for the warden's prison work (so the NIV; he did not do everything, so the NSRV). The narrator interprets what happens in theological terms; reports of God's enabling activity (cf. vv. 2-6). [43]

The Bible states: "But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison."[44]

The keeper of the prison trusted Joseph and gave him freedom of movement and authority over the other inmates. As Joseph performed his duties for the keeper of the prison, God's unseen hand caused three persons to cross paths. [45] The account speaks of two of Pharaoh's chief servants, the butler and the baker, who were both incarcerated and

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[42] Walter Brueggeman, *Interpretation A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 320.

[43] Fretheim, *New Interpreter's Bible,* 610.

[44] Gen. 39: 21

[45] Gen. 40

under Joseph's stewardship in the prison. The scripture is silent as to the reasons for their detention. We are only informed of the following through the scriptures:

> And it came to pass after these things that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord king of Egypt. 2. And pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. 3. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into prison, the place where Joseph was bound.[46]

Now both of these men had disturbing dreams on the same night. They talked about their experience and the dreams that made no sense to them. Victor P. Hamilton writes about the plight of these two men.

> The chief problem that gnaws at them is not the dream itself, but the absence of a dream interpreter. Confined to prison, they are shut off from Pharaoh's oneiromancers who may be able to assist them in this desperate moment. Few would have had insights and explanations prized as highly as those of the king professional dream interpreters. A dream without an accompanying interpretation is like a diagnosis without a prognosis[47]

Joseph came forth and interpreted their dreams. As a youth, Joseph never interpreted dreams. Joseph dreamed great dreams, yet a quick read of scripture reveals that others interpreted his dreams. Joseph may have been unable to discern the meaning of his own vision. Joseph sought no pay for this service; his only request for the butler to remember him. Genesis 40:23 tells that the butler forgot Joseph. Chapter 40 verse 5 seems awkward, the author of the *Interpreters Bible* states:

> The awkwardness of the verse is due to the fact that the PJE is here combining two different representations—that of J, according to which the dreams were identical, and that of E, that they were different. From J comes and one night they both dreamed; From E,

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[46] Ibid., 1-3.

[47] Victor P. Hamilton. *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 1995), 476.

> each his own dream, and each dream with its own meaning. The clause referring to the king of Egypt is, of course from the J. The Israelites shared in the belief, held by the Egyptians and by other people in that age, in divinely inspired dreams. (For reference see Skinner, Genesis p.461). But generally in the O. T. the dream either contains the revelation (e.g., 20:3; 28:13, 15; I King 3:5-15), or its significance is plain (e.g., 28:11-12; 37:5-10). The art of interpreting dreams is ascribed only to Joseph and to Daniel. It may be that this was a feature of the Shechem tradition of Joseph. The story of Daniel was modeled on that of Joseph. [48]

These men were under arrest and could not retain or consult with the professional interpreters who were present at Pharaoh's courts, something they would have done if they had been free. Joseph's words tell them they did not need to hire the professional. God was able to reveal the meanings of the dreams to whomever he wanted.

Chapter 41: 1-57 is a conflation of the J and E, with some additions from P: 773 verses: 44, 46-47, 54b, 57, and possibly 45a.[49] According to the authors, J. told the story of Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph interpretation, advice and his appointment of the Slavic labor and the appointments of helper and the birth of his sons. The author tells us that the E narrative is thus little more than a revision of that of J.

The scriptures[50] tell us two years after the butler's release, Pharaoh had two disturbing dreams that no one could interpret. As Pharaoh sought for someone to help him understand these disturbing dreams, the butler remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh of his experience with this young man while he was in prison. This unnamed man, known only for what he did but not for who he was, reminded Pharaoh that two years earlier he and the baker were incarcerated for some unnamed offense and was detained by the

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[48] George Buttrick, Samuel Arthur, Walter Terrien, Bowie Russell, Paul Scherer, John Knox, and Nolan B. Harmon, *The Interpreters Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon/Cokesbury Press, 1952), 770.

[49] Ibid., 773.

[50] Genesis 41

captain of the guards. He informed Pharaoh that both he and the baker had disturbing dreams on the same night. As they shared their thoughts and concerns with one another, wondering what the significance of the dreams was, Joseph came in and interpreted their dreams for them. Just as Joseph had interpreted, the dreams came to pass. After hearing the butler's story, Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and they brought him speedily out of the dungeon to Pharaoh's court. Scripture tells us:

"15. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it."[51] Walter Brueggeman writes concerning this chapter:

> If one follows conventional source division, chapter 40 and chapter 39 may belong, respectively, to J and E. However, they are mutually exclusive. In important ways, chapter 40 is a parallel to chapter 39. Both add to the general theme of 39-41, Joseph's rise and success in the empire. Like chapter 39, chapter 40 must be heard in the total unit of 39-41. The primary movement of 39-41 comes in chapter 41. Chapters 39-40 appear to be only preparatory. In the present chapter, we are alerted to Joseph's gifts as a dream interpreter. But in terms of the actual advancement of Joseph, there is none. At the beginning, he is in prison, even "in charge" (39:22). At the end (40:23), he is still there, but forgotten. This chapter serves primarily to pace the narrative and to build suspense toward the confrontation of chapter 41.[52]

The history of Moses and Israel and Martin and African Americans is very similar. These histories seem to parallel each other; Moses was raised as royalty while, Martin was raised as a member of one of Atlanta's leading African American families. One was raised in 2nd class citizenship in the Deep South at a time when being black in America was dangerous; the other rose as a prince in a land where his real family was held as slaves under the power of the state. These scriptures concerning Joseph relate to

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[51] Ibid., 14 -16.

[52] Brueggeman, *Interpretation,* 320.

my project because his own brothers out of envy and jealousy sentenced Joseph, an innocent man, to the pit. He was then taken from the pit to Potiphar's house, then from Potiphar's house to the prison. Joseph served his time without bitterness. He served his time learning and growing and, at the right moment, God navigated circumstances that took him from prison to the leadership of the land of Egypt. These verses reveal God's power to deliver from prison to leadership. The text indicates that Joseph listened and affirmed that Pharaoh's dreams and Joseph's interpretations were given by God to preserve life during a future famine that would take place at the end of seven plentiful years of crop growth in Egypt. Joseph's counsel to Pharaoh was to find a man who was discreet and wise, and let him select and appoint officers throughout Egypt, who would take up a fifth of the crops during the seven fruitful years. This person would have to establish storehouses to stockpile the grain collected and would need to keep it under Pharaoh's control until the seven years of famine were over. These recommendations pleased Pharaoh. He believed that they would not be able to find a man as discreet and as wise as Joseph. Pharaoh made Joseph second in charge of Egypt. Ironically, while Joseph was in prison, Pharaoh did not see leadership potential, he saw a criminal. However, God had prepared Joseph for leadership and ministry beyond the walls of his incarceration before he entered prison. It is only in prison where the opportunity for Pharaoh to realize Joseph's potential and leadership is revealed. Now, Pharaoh is ready to accept what Joseph has to offer. The butler who was the benefactor of Joseph's wisdom and council in prison was certainly impressed with the accuracy of his predictions. However, Joseph's skills were forgotten.

The whole of Joseph's story is framed by dreams. Walter Brueggeman suggests an interpretative issue that demands the focus of the researcher's attention in this chapter.

> It is well known that dreams are prominent in ancient literature and in Egyptian reports. The issue of dream interpretation is a crucial one in Ancient times. Thus the narrative has an authentic Egyptian coloring. But that understanding is not central to the theological claim of the text.[53]

Brueggeman further suggests that we should avoid being distracted by a history-of-religions approach to dreams and avoid relying on contemporary notions of the meaning of dreams. He engages the reader in an examination of three contemporary notions of understanding dreams. The first comes from the analytic psychology community that suggests dreams help us relive and work through dimensions of the past. Dreams are said to be part of personal "archaeology."[54] Brueggeman states "But clearly, the dreams of our text are not oriented toward the past. They are aimed at a future God will grant."[55] The second comes from current Jungian psychology that treats dreams as data of a common unconscious that is shared by all persons. For them, dreams are ways of recognizing an unknown and universal field of reality. Brueggeman points out that the dreams of Genesis 40 are very specific. He further suggests that they do not reflect a field of reality that already exists, instead they assert a newness that is anticipated and yet to happen. Brueggeman then looks at the third type of understanding of dreams that is psychological gnosticism. This perspective assumes that dreams can be interpreted by special techniques, used by persons with identifiable skills. In the ancient world, there

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[53] Ibid., 321.

[54] Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy,* (Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 521-25.

[55] Brueggeman, *Interpretation,* 321.

were persons skilled in such abilities. But this narrative makes a different claim. The dreams are a gift, and its interpretation is a gift done not by a special skill or technique, but by the power of God freely given to this particular man. Brueggeman then states:

> The dreams of this chapter have no independent importance. They offer ways of presenting Joseph. The narrative has no interest in the butler or the baker, or even in pharaoh who has a birthday (v.20) The interest is in the destiny of Joseph, his sorry lot and his unusual authority. From the beginning, even his scornful brothers, Joseph is the 'master of the dream' (37:19). The entire narrative is concerned with the larger dream of chapter 37, the dream of rule. In chapter 40, we meet two subordinate dreams. But the narrator does not linger with them. They are only instruments of the larger dream. The question beneath the narrative is the future of Joseph's dream. Chapter 40 is to be seen as a step along the way as that dream comes to fulfillment.[56]

If Joseph's story is read with an open mind, it is clear that an innocent man found himself betrayed by family, enslaved in a foreign land, and incarcerated for a crime he did not commit. He could have become bitter, hateful and vengeful, but he decided to make the best out of a bad situation. Joseph entered slavery without any administrative skills; he was a person of character who possessed a sharp mind and was eager to learn. Joseph's drive and determination enabled him to strive, grow and become an asset to his master. The text makes it clear that the Lord was with Joseph and granted him favor in this place of pain and alienation; he excelled in all he attempted to do. It is also obvious that Joseph maintained his standards of righteousness and holiness before God and man. It is interesting to note that the dysfunction in Joseph's family led to the circumstances that caused his incarceration, while he internalized his family's faith in God, which helped sustain him and brought him out of his imprisonment.

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[56] Ibid., 322.

Out of all the persons incarcerated in the scripture, Joseph was selected because his experience is symbolic of many in our society who happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. We could have selected Daniel, Jeremiah, Jesus, Peter, James, John or Paul; they all had something in common: they were all victims of systematic persecution. They were also convicted and viewed by their community as worthy of punishment and alienation.

Today, everyone has need of someone to stand with or present him or herself as individuals of worth in some business or social environment. Ex-offenders returning home really are in need of this type of validation; just as Joseph needed the butler to introduce him to Pharaoh, ex-offenders returning to the Dayton community need the church to stand with them.[57]

A New Testament example of this principle is found in scripture. [58] Saul needed Barnabas to stand with him before a church full of people afraid of him because of his bad behavior. We are introduced to Saul in Acts[59]: who as a young man gladly watched on as people stoned Stephen. If there are doubts about Saul's political and ecclesiastical leanings in this matter,[60] he informs us that he was consenting to Stephen's death. Saul did not throw any rocks, but he was happy about the outcome of Stephen's death. His unholy joy was not only a private position, but also became his public policy. George Arthur Buttrick writes,

> The first three references to the chief character of the Acts are Significant. Saul first appears as a silent witness to the death of

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[57] Gen. 41: 12-14

[58] Acts 9: 25- 28

[59] Acts 7: 58

[60] Acts 8: 1

> Stephen (7:58) to which he then gave his full consent (8:1), and after that proceeds to participate actively in the campaign against the Christians (vs. 3). Those three steps represent the normal course of evil in a man's life. First, the man is a silent witness; then a consenting spectator; and finally an active participant. The difficulty of changing the course and arresting the progress of evil becomes greater at each step of the way.[61]

J. Vernon McGee writes concerning that Day:

> These two young men—Stephen and Saul of Tarsus—are together here for the first time, and only time. They are enemies. They stand on the opposite of the cross. Stephen falls asleep. Jesus puts his body to sleep to await the rapture. Stephen goes into the presence of Christ who is standing to meet him. Stephen is the first martyr of the church to go to be with the lord. The other young man there that day was a Pharisee, and he thought he had everything. He looked up into heaven when Stephen said he saw the heavens open. I am sure that Saul looked up longingly and admitted to himself, *I don't see what he sees. I have an empty heart.* Stephen was a tremendous witness to Saul. Stephen was the one, I believe, who prepared Saul for the appearance of the lord Jesus on the Damascus road, as we shall see.[62]

Saul was full of zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Robert W. Walls writes about chapter 8:1–3:

Saul went out and devastated the Church in Jerusalem. He invaded every house in the community and incarcerated, both men and women who trusted Jesus the Christ for salvation.[63] The text suggests Saul went wild persecuting the church and the saints scattered out of fear of this madman. As the saints ran for their lives, they set up churches. Saul, in hot pursuit heard rumors that a group of believers were in Damascus; he sought and received letters from the high priest to the leaders of the synagogues in

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[61] Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Bible,* 106.

[62] McGee, *Thru the Bible,* 541.

[63] Acts 9:1

Damascus to bring any that he found who confessed faith in Christ back in chains to Jerusalem.

It was while he was on his way to persecute the church in Damascus that he had an encounter with the risen Christ that left him blind. God called Ananias and sent him forth to baptize Saul and prayed for his sight to return. After his healing, Saul/Paul writes[64] that he felt the call to preach Christ immediately to the Gentiles. He states that he did not confer with flesh and blood, neither did he go up to Jerusalem to learn from the Apostles, but he went into Arabia where God revealed to him the substance of the gospel. After this period of instruction, he returned to Damascus where he stayed for three years with the Christians in Damascus and preached the good news concerning the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the synagogues until a murder plot was discovered. The disciples, upon hearing of the plot, took Saul by night and helped him to escape the deathtraps by lowering him over the wall in a basket.

> 26. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he aspired to join himself to the disciples: but they were afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. 27. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. [65]

In the Genesis text, Joseph was an innocent man sold by his siblings into slavery, out of jealousy and hatred. He was later sent to prison because of his refusal to yield to Potiphar's wife's unholy request. Joseph served his time improving himself and gained favor with both God and man. The baker shared his experience of Joseph with Pharaoh

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[64] Galatians 1: 16-19

[65] Acts 9:26-28

who recognized greatness in this man and elevated him to a leadership position in Egypt. In the Acts text, Saul, who is also known as Paul, was guilty of verbal and physical violence in Jerusalem. Some believers had lost their freedom and others lost their lives by Saul's hands. When Saul left Jerusalem, he had some blank arrest warrants for anyone who trusted Christ for salvation in Damascus.

Who can blame the church in Jerusalem for their distrust of Saul, when he returned to the very place where he had caused so much pain? Fear is one of the main problems facing many in the Christian community today; some in the church thought this was a trick to infiltrate their ranks. In that critical hour, it was Barnabas who stepped forward and testified about his experience with Saul in Damascus. Barnabas' witness alleviated their fears and liberated Saul to move into the place of ministry where God had called him.

The purpose of this document is not to indict the criminal justice system, but to underscore the need for the faith community to be involved in the rehabilitation process of those who are incarcerated. Jesus said the day would come when he would separate the sheep from the goats. He says,

Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

> The questions of these two groups of people literally, nations) and the responses by the king are highly repetitious, thereby strengthening the instruction. They review what have become the traditional corporal works of mercy: feeding the hungry, giving

> drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked,
> caring for the sick, and visiting the imprisoned.[66]

When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brother, you have done it unto me. [67]

Although this text refers to the eschatological reign of Christ, it also underscores the need for the church to move beyond social stagnation and become a viable force of compassion in the community and in the lives of the less fortunate. In this story, Jesus points out the business of the church in society by showing that the church is neglecting its responsibilities. The list in the text reads like a social indictment: The hungry remain unfed, the sick lie helplessly without as much as a visit from their church family, and the church does not visit its prisoners. Instead, their spiritual, social, and psychological welfare are left in the hands of a godless government who profits from their imprisonment. Jesus reveals that when we act in response to our human needs, that is fulfilling our fleshly desires over the call of Jesus Christ, we are in reality failing to respond to Him. We also ignore Jesus' call when we focus more on materialism over caring and showing compassion to the hungry, sick, and the incarcerated members of our society. Dwight Hopkins, in his book entitled, *Heart and Head: Black Theology—Past, Present, and Future*, explains, "In Christian scriptures, Jesus give us two major texts. The first is in Luke 4:18 ff. Here, from the Christian perspective, it is no accident that Jesus is handed Isaiah 61 to read. In this major public proclamation, Jesus describes how the

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[66] Ronald D. Witherup, *Matthew God With us* (New York: New City Press, 1950), 9178.

[67] Matthew 25: 34-40

divine spirit has anointed him to side with the poor, the imprisoned, and the broken-hearted, and to proclaim the year of the Lord of Jubilee for the poor."[68] The church has become unconcerned with the suffering of the poor, sick and incarcerated. The church must re-engage itself in the political action and social justice ministry confronting the life of the community sharing the gospel of Christ.

Careful examination of this text and of our society reveals that the uncaring behavior of people that Jesus indicated in the Matthew text is still pervasive today. Although historically the church has responded to the needs of the poor and the incarcerated when it has been called upon, its attention span has been short. The resources needed for it to respond effectively are often limited and volunteers are few. Like the people in this Matthew text, Christians have closed their eyes and ignored the unfair laws that have robbed people of their freedom and deprived them of equality. We have refused to share our care, concern and consideration for the large segments of our population that live sequestered behind prison bars. However, Jesus commands his people to share their love with all humankind. Our Lord said "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another."

In St. John 5, Jesus addresses a man who had been lame and depended on the community for survival. The text takes place during the Feast of Pentecost when Jesus and his disciples went to Jerusalem. At Jerusalem, there was a pool called Bethesda, a place with five porches. On those porches lay a great multitude of sick people who were blind, halt and had withered limbs. The text indicates that these people were waiting for the troubling of the water, for they believed an angel would trouble the water at a certain

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[68] Dwight Hopkins, *Heart and Head: Black Theology—Past, Present, and Future*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 57.

time and the first person to step into the pool after the troubling of the water would be cured of their illness.

The Bible indicates that there was a certain man who had been waiting at the pool for thirty-eight years for healing. The text states:

> When our Lord saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in this case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, it is the Sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they him, what man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. [69]

For this man, his sickness had been a type of incarceration. He lived a slave like dependency, for he lived at the mercy of others for his survival. Indeed, the tone of the text suggests that he must have felt frustrated and depressed. He was not at the pool of Bethesda by himself, for there were many other people who suffered with a sickness that went to the core of their humanity. Although this text highlights a physical ailment, it is easy to take a leap of faith and see this man's sickness as a symbol of a societal illness that was pervasive in the ancient world and is still evident in westernized societies in the twenty-first century.

Many in the African American community are proverbially lame with a societal sickness that has made the community dependent on the very entity that has contributed

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[69] St. John 5:6-14

to its paralysis, the government. Some in the African American community may be sick because they suffer from an inadequate educational system, low self-esteem issues, and the list can go to infinity. Some survive these systemic illnesses and become productive members of the American society, while others are too weak to overcome the lure of fast money and crime. Hence, many have given up hope and have sunken deeper into a moral despair that only leads to a life destined for court appearances and eventually penitentiary. In America, crime does not pay, for the severely sick of the African American community are imprisoned in a system that appears to be concerned with the execution of a westernized justice system that has as its motivation, consequences and punishments rather than rehabilitation. Unfortunately, some of the prisoners spend their time of incarceration unchanged and fearful of life outside of the prison walls. For them, there seems to be no hope. Their incarceration is physical, spiritual, and mental.

Advocates of prison reform argue that rehabilitation happens for prisoners as a result of education, job skill training, and counseling. Although these statements may be true, in this writer's judgment, one of the best ways of liberation for prisoners is through a Christ-centered chaplain department. The chaplains prepare the inmates for reentry into mainstream society through prison ministries that are connected to local churches in the community outside of prisons. There is a disconnection between the chaplain corps and community prison ministries at local churches. The attitudes of our society both in church and in the broader society are unforgiving of prisoners. For this reason, it is difficult to establish church supported halfway houses and other reentry programs in viable communities. The fact is that where there are viable Christ-centered chaplains and prison ministry teams, inmates have responded to the life-giving word of God and proclaimed

the liberation that they find in Christ. The challenge before them is reentry into the community.

In the St. John text, Jesus told the man from the pool that he had been released from his infirmity and that he was to go and sin no more or something worse would happen to him. Now that this man is released, there should have been someone there to help this once lame man survive outside of his infirmity. It does not seem that the disciples volunteered to help this man with his reentry process. The point is clear. The church should be there to provide support for those who are returning to the community so that they will not return to the very way of life that caused them injury. In order to accomplish healthy reentries for those returning, the church must prepare the communities that have been victimized by these ex-offenders. Persons who have experienced a life changing and affirming view of society are returning to unforgiving communities. However, the community and the church alike need to understand that unless they proactively respond to ex–offenders in a loving and affirming way, they will eventually react to the prisoners, but they will react from their pain. This pain may be brought about by the ex-offenders' renewal of their criminal behavior in the community. The church must break this vicious cycle of recidivism by loving those who have been crippled by an unloving society.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

James Cone has been called the father of Black theology; the truth is that Cone was one among many African American preachers/teachers debating the meaning of the

black revolution of the sixties. Cone was the first theologian to give formal and systematic expression to the meaning of Black religion and to place it in the context of the Black revolution. Cone states:

Theology is not universal language about God. Rather, it is human speech informed by historical and theological traditions, and written for particular times and places. Theology is contextual language—that is, defined by the human situation that gives birth to it. Therefore, when one reads a theological textbook, it is important to note the year of its publication, the audience for whom it was written, and the issues the author felt compelled to address.[70] In the midst of the civil rights struggle, a movement led by the Rev. Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., black militant Stokely Carmichael coined the philosophy of Black Power. He insisted that "Blacks must think in terms of 'black power' and use it to combat the 'white power' that has held them down."[71]

John Hope Franklin wrote about the 1960 Black Revolution, which erupted among Blacks in the United States:

> The decade began with high hopes. There was still the belief that the school desegregation decision would somehow bring about a truly democratic educational system in the United States. The sit-in movement, the freedom riders, the marches and demonstrations, and the voter registration drives, supported by untold numbers of whites as well as blacks, suggested that an entirely new and thoroughly effective approach to the race relations was in the marking. Slowly, then more rapidly, the optimism gave way to pessimism and even cynicism. It was not merely the opposition to equality on the part of white citizen's councils or Northern white mothers who rallied against school desegregation or white construction workers who bitterly opposed the employment of black workers and apprentices, but the feeling, bolstered by bitter experience, that justice and equality were not to be extended to

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[70] Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, XI.

[71] Franklin and Moss Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom* , 515.

> blacks under any circumstances. This created the gloomy atmosphere out of which the Black Revolution emerged.[72]

Cone suggests that the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, a man considered by many in the African American community to be a friend, the murder of Malcolm X in 1965 and the feeling of hurt and anger shared by many over the weak prosecution of his killers, contributed to the Black Revolution. These emotions of hurt and anger were slowly boiling into a rage in the mid-sixties with the numerous murders of civil rights workers and innocent children with no justice, no conviction nor serious prosecution of these killers for their crimes. This rage exploded when the Rev. Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. This murderous act symbolized, for many Blacks, the rejection of their long peaceful struggle for peace. Over one hundred cities experienced several days of rioting, looting and burning, a response that King rejected with his words and deeds during his life.

The more radical achievement-leaning groups within the civil rights community disagreed with Martin Luther King's position on a more moderate course in their common quest for social justice. They wanted a proactive, any means necessary strategy because they could not envision whites responding to Black demands on the basis of Christian love, good will, or even peaceful demonstration.

Cone states concerning this movement:

> In 1967 the Black Power Conference in Newark, New Jersey, called for "partitioning of the United States into two separate independent nations, one to be a homeland for black Americans." Meanwhile, a group of young California Militants led by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale organized the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, and Eldridge Cleaver, its most articulate spokesman,

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[72] Ibid., 518.

> declared that the choice before the country was "total liberty for black people or total destruction for America."[73]

Cone uses systematic theology as tools to understand and structure his thinking about this new black consciousness and how it interrelated with the black church and the evolving social-economic climate. "In systematic theology sources are the 'formative factors' that determine the character of a given theology. The norm is the criterion to which the sources . . . must be subjective."[74] That is, the sources are the relevant data for the theological task, whereas the norm determines how the data will be used.

When Cone first considered the African American experience of the sixties, he had to admit that Black consciousness was still evolving. Many agreed with Cone and may not have responded to African American awareness. It is difficult to understand for it is in a constant state of transition. It is difficult to determine the impact that the influx of various Caribbean individuals into our society may have on whether one calls one's self, Colored, Negro, Black or African American. These are all words to which many of the people of the African Diaspora in America may or may not respond. African culture influenced the emergence of the hip-hop culture, the corrupting influences of sexually exploitative images in cyberspace and cable television, and changing public policies that allow foul language to flow unchecked over network television in the name of profit and freedom of speech. The Development of BET and MTV, the commercialization of hip-hop from the cry of the streets, a merger of poetry and music, a new urban art form that was used to express the issues that were confronting a people in a public forum. This healthy art form is now filled with four-letter invectives that demean and degrade people.

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[73] Ibid., 519-20.

[74] James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 1.

There are a host of other contributors found in the social, educational and economic arena that affect the African American consciousness.

Donald G. Luck states, "that there are many potential and personal benefits that can result from studying Theology. Perhaps, the most obvious is the opportunity to integrate our understanding of the wide world which we live in."[75] Luck suggests that theology is the field of academic study and writing by which the church attempts to understand and share its own faith in a world at odds with its mission and the lifestyle that it promotes. He also implies that the attitude held by many, suggesting that American action and effort has significantly affected the human race, is a distortion of reality. The fact that this country has made a lasting impression on this world cannot be debated. The country's actions, as noble as they have been in many instances, and as evil and misguided as they have been in others, are not more important than the ideals and values that are promoted; the freedoms that America stands for, the ability to achieve individual dreams, to create and make products, to own land and create wealth, freedom of speech, freedom to be innovative in industry and technology. This nation stands for freedom to worship God according to the dictates of the individual heart and to choose one's own religious beliefs and praying grounds. Surely, American action in this world is important, but not as important as the basic beliefs and values that the American ideas stand for. It is through group and personal beliefs that people's worldviews are shaped and people's views of life and goals are set. Personal and national beliefs and values are the fuels that propel the actions of a people.

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[75] Donald G. Luck, *Why Study Theology?* (St. Louis, MO: John Knox Press, 1999), 47.

Sometimes shocking and destructive events like 9/11 in New York City or Hurricane Katrina and the devastation of the gulf coast propel people to act. It was in that great metropolitan city of New Orleans, Louisiana that poor people, mostly African Americans, were left behind to fend for themselves as the rising flood waters overwhelmed relief and supply efforts and hundreds died. It was in the midst of these shocking third-world conditions that people began to refocus their attention from their horrific circumstances to their core beliefs and values. How do these shocking events intersect with our theological position for suffering humanity!

In the midst of their suffering and needs, these people suffered (surrounded by water and guns held by police officers in the city of New Orleans) while suburban communities blocked their abilities to escape their oppressive conditions, and thugs took advantage of the chaos. The innocent, starving and abused people at the superdome and convention center in New Orleans came together to survive. The media announced the attempts of the people to survive as looters and thieves. They had to make a moral decision and judgment about themselves while in the midst of desperate circumstances. These decisions revealed to the people at both locations in New Orleans how their beliefs and values sustained them and helped them to endure and survive their circumstances.

Bishop Joseph A. Johnson, Jr. writes about the African American experience:

> The early Black preacher was primarily the preacher of the word, difficulties of life, and the saving word that he found in the Bible. His ultimate purpose was one of bringing healing and liberation to a despised and depressed people who were exposed to the vast ambiguities of life. He sought by the word of God to bring healing and liberation to the broken personhood of black men and women whose lives had been disrupted and degraded by slavery. The Black preacher confronted the black witnessing community with the glorious promises of the gospel, its joys, hopes, victories, and confidences. He entered into the world and was a part of that

> world-the world of his black brothers to show them what he had learned about eternity and beauty in his preaching. The whole man was acting and reacting under the stimulus offered by the spiritual needs of the black witnessing community. The Black preacher stood in the midway between the inexhaustible storehouse of spiritual dynamics and the depleted lives of his black brothers shouted, "Walk together children don't you get weary," or moaned "There is a balm in Gilead.[76]"

If this writer was to think theologically about the issues confronting the community that was to be served, then different ways of viewing the group and thinking about their problem must be used. The writer reviewed the thoughts of some of the great thinkers who were also confronted by the vicissitudes of life as a guild and pattern his thought process.

Bishop Johnson states that:

> The black preacher is an interpreter of the black experience. He interpreted it in the light of Gods revelation in Jesus Christ and thereby provided the moral dynamics for living. He believed that even though black people had suffered, there was this conviction that God had brought them to this country for a divine mission to become in a very real and profound sense, the people of God, The medium of Gods revelation, the proclaimers of his loving mercy to a decadent and morally corrupted society.[77]

Bishop Johnson suggests that it is the work and ministry of the church to help people to trust Christ and allow him to shape their belief. Johnson's writing suggests that the church has and continues to achieve this process through sharing its theological tradition or doctrines through preaching and teaching. The Church continues to help people take inventory of their lives and to reshape the way they live. Johnson helps us to see that life's troubles cannot be overcome by church doctrine alone. Someone has to act,

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[76] Joseph A. Johnson Jr. *The Soul of the Black Preacher*. Revised lecture notes from Lecture "The Legitimacy of Black Theology" delivered at Phillips School of Theology, Atlanta, Georgia, 1969 and Eden Theological Seminary Webstergrove, Missouri, 1970, 115.

[77] Ibid., 115-116.

someone has to translate life's struggle into a word of encouragement in order to sustain and encourage people to take actions. The people who call themselves Christians must be busy practicing what they believe about God.

Theologians work on simulating their understanding of the Christian faith and lives with their understanding of the wider world. They are called to represent and articulate the abstract concepts and doctrinal beliefs of the church, not their private opinions, but what the church has embraced historically. It is in the context of this statement that this work is offered.

The theological issue underlying this project requires that the researcher understand the attitude of the victimized community. Andrew Sung Park has led the way in presenting the theology of the victim. Park promotes the Korean concept of Han, while quoting a piece from Hak Hyun Young lecture at Union Theological Seminary on April 13, 1982:

> Han is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustice suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of acute pain of sorrow in one's guts and bowels making the whole body writhe and wriggle, and an obstinate urge to take "revenge" and to right the wrong all these combined.[78]

Park suggests that Han is a void of grief experiences by the innocent. This void is not just emptiness "but an abyss filled with agony"; it is a dark night of grief. He further suggests that this intense grief swallows all other agendas of life.

The fact that Han is voiceless parallels clearly to the life of those who are powerless, marginalized and voiceless. Park writes:

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[78] Andrew Sung Park, *Racial Conflict & Healing An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 9.

> Social injustice, political repression, economic exploitation, cultural contempt, and war, all of which affect the downtrodden as a whole, raise the collective hand. When the oppressed undergo suffering over several generations without release, they develop collective unconscious Han and transmit it to their posterity. In Jungian terms, this is something similar to the "collective unconscious. Collective unconscious Han is, however, different from Jung's. For Jung the collective unconscious is more like an atmosphere in which we live than something that is found within us.[79]

Using Park's definition and method of understanding the mindset of a victimized community is most useful, especially in this project. This project's goal is to assess the victimized community's attitude toward ex-offenders and help them to recognize the magnitude of the problem that it will face unless it gets involved in helping ex-offenders have a healthy start. The mission and work of the church is to be a loving, forgiving community. The African American community in the United States has experienced Han over hundreds of years of slavery and Jim Crow. This deep agony-filled abyss has taken up residence in the descendents of the slaves and is manifesting itself in the lives of this generation.

The local church selected, as the site for this project, is a microcosm of the Montgomery County community and reflects the general attitude of the community as it relates to receiving ex-offenders back home after they are released from the punitive system. In this setting, the preacher can speak prophetically to a congregation composed of people who labor in government, families of men and women who are incarcerated, officers of the court and law enforcement members.

Many are aware of the problems confronting those returning home because they have a relative or a friend who have returned and faced unforgiving communities that

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[79] Ibid., 9-10.

impeded their ability to have a healthy start. They share with the ex-offenders the feelings of helplessness and frustration at the structure in place that hinders a healthy return home. The issues confronting ex-offenders are larger then the purview of a single local church, yet the answer to the problems of recidivism can be found through the Lord of the church. One of the goals of this project is to effect change in the social consciousness of this community by the development of a model that can be replicated and affect the political will to change the laws that adversely affect those who have paid their debt to society through the justice system.

The theological issues at the heart of the re-entry movement are not new to the Christian church; in fact, they are imbedded in the Ten Commandments given by God to the children of Israel and the words of Christ in the sermon on the mountain. These Judeo-Christian principles were adopted at the founding of this nation as the basic principle for any civilization to grow and prosper, and are foundational for the laws of our society.

The criminal justice system was created to punish and rehabilitate persons who for one reason or another refused to be governed by these basic codes of conduct of this nation. Over the years, harsher punishment, warehousing and very little treatment replaced the original rehabilitation design of the justice system's mandate. The best hope for true rehabilitation appears to reside in the chaplain's office. The chaplain is the person who will arrange for groups of willing volunteers to receive training for ministry in the institutional setting and give the rules that have to be observed by a person or group.

The chaplain's mandate is to provide religious services, counseling, and studies that honor all faith traditions in the institution. It is through the ministry of this office that

a message of hope and renewed purpose is discovered through the ministry of the word of God; worshippers are led into relationship with Christ. It is through this ministry behind the walls that many who had avoided going to Christ or have rejected the values of the church will come to recognize their need for Repentance (Μεταωοειτε), first encountered and understood to literally mean a turning away from their individual sin and turning toward God.

The chapel behind the walls becomes the place where they learn that they have to stop focusing on their old way of living and that which is contrary to the revealed will of God by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead and guide them into right living. . It is in the chapel that they make up their minds to never do anything that offends God and hurt his work here on earth. It is behind the walls that these new believers are changed as they turn from a sense of helplessness because of their overwhelming feelings that the odds are stacked against them and replace it with the power found in the scripture "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."[80] They come to know that they can endure the pain of sorrow, the sting of disappointment, and the trauma of the loss of their family. Finally, they come to know that God is real.

Behind the walls in the chapel they learn that repentance is more than being sorry that they were caught, but a sorrow so deep that they are ashamed that they have offended God and did harm to the work of Christ because of their bad attitude or behavior.

It is behind the walls that they learn through the fire of incarceration that they are delivered and set free from a life of bondage to sin by the redemptive work of Christ on the cross; It is behind the walls that deprive them of familiar relationships that they

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[80] Philippians 4:13

discover that they have been brought unto a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus' name. When redemption and repentance occurs in the life of a person, that person may be ready for the community; however, the community may not be prepared for the persons who have inflicted pain.

Saul/Paul, who had victimized the church in Jerusalem, was received with great reluctance and fear after his conversion and call into Christian ministry in Damascus. His powerful witness disturbed the Jews who attempted to kill him.[81] The scriptures make it clear that he was saved by the disciples, who helped him escape by night by lowering him down the walls of the city in a basket.[82] The scriptures tell us that Paul came to Jerusalem and attempted to join with the disciples, but they were afraid of him and did not believe that Paul could be a disciple. Barnabas brought him before the apostles and spoke of Paul's conversion on the road to the city of Damascus and how he preached boldly in the name of Jesus. Paul was ready for Jerusalem, but Jerusalem was not ready for Paul.

Someone had to prepare the Christian community to receive and grant forgiveness and restoration to this victimizer who had been changed by the power of God to become useful in the community. The ministry teams working through the chaplain's office have labored to lead the believers behind the wall into relationship with Christ.

This project undertakes the task of preparing the offended community to take the risk of loving ex-offenders and assisting them to have a healthy start. Some people who will accept help from the community may disappoint the community by displays of ingratitude. Others may return to their old survival strategies.

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[81] Acts 9:25

[82] Acts 9:26-28

Historical Foundation

During the intensive session in August 2006, Rev Ivan Douglas Hicks lectured on Cultural Theology and presented another way of viewing history. A method that he called, "Theo-Afrocology," which he defined,

> As the discipline of moving from our center to a place where we view the African as the subject of history and not the object of history. Second, to view what has been passed as history with a critical eye. Thirdly, to use as a reference the place where the first written and spoken language was spoken KMT which means land of the black people. Egypt is our first reference point.[83]

Rev. Hicks suggests that, if we are to truly understand God, we have to start with creation and end with the 21st century. When writing their history book, the first chapter of which is titled "Land of Their Ancestors," John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. sought to enlighten a race of people whose knowledge of self was shaped by brutal slavery.

The people from the African continent were viewed as less than human and stripped of their culture. This was achieved in the name of law and for the purpose of making profit. They were legally declared to be three-fifths human in relationship to their white counterparts in the constitution. This dehumanizing process was sanctified by the religious institution of that day for the sake of nation building.

The North fought a civil war to preserve the union, while the southern states seceded from the Union and formed the Confederate States of America to preserve their way of life. This was a way of living that was dependent on slave labor. The Civil War was fought by the South to protect the right to own people of color, a system they called

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[83] Ivan Douglas Hicks Lecture Notes Jan., 2006 United Theological Seminary Dayton, Ohio A new way of viewing African American History.

states' rights. The implications of dehumanizing slavery and the outcome of the Civil War have reverberated and had a lasting and profound impact on human relationships in this country. During reconstruction, the state of Virginia was the first state to use the Justice system to disenfranchise African Americans of their new constitutional right to vote, a position that thirteen states still employed.

When we approach the subject of the relationship between religion and the development of a system to deal with those who violate the rules of society, we will find that the religious community created an environment that was at the root of the philosophy that guided its development. Andrew Skotnicki suggests we may assume from a linguistic analysis that the practice of incarceration, as a form of punishment, was religious. He suggests that many of the terms that were common in monastic life are found in the lexicon of punitive life, such as, cell, penitentiary and reformatory. Skotnicki states:

> It became clear that the religious community itself had substantially affected the developments that saw the post-revolutionary evangelical emphasis on conversion translate into the first penitentiaries. In the early nineteenth century, a confident and committed evangelical Protestantism dominated the American religious economy.

It was schooled in the great awakening of the 1740s, and was undergoing a renewed period of revival that would culminate in another Great Awakening in the 1820s. The roots of this revival mentality were deeply significant permutations within Calvinism, spearheaded by groups seeking to replace the arbitrariness of divine judgment, and God's "secret will" with a more rational and public theology centered in

the covenant.[84] Correction theory has changed in many ways to reflect the attitudes of society. John Hope Franklin writes,

> Vice President George Bush was a formidable candidate made more so by incumbency and by his long service in public life. During the campaign Bush cultivated the upper-class suburban voters and conservatives by accusing Dukakis of being soft on crime. The example that became the central feature of this Republican strategy was the televised accusation that Dukakis granted a parole to a black felon, Willie Horton, who then committed another felony.[85]

The nightly airing of that political ad campaign of a revolving gate outside of the prison with a constant procession of Black and Brown felons going in and out of prison was effective in creating the climate where rehabilitation was replaced by warehousing of inmates; their efforts proved successful at the ballot box. John Hope Franklin states in "Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race Rights and Taxes on American Politics," that "Thomas and Mary Edsall claimed [to have] 'conjured up the criminal defendants' and prisoners' rights movements, black crime, permissive liberal elites, a revenue-hungry state, eroding traditional values, tattered patriotism, and declining American prestige."[86] This campaign signaled the end of congressional support for rehabilitation and the beginning of warehousing prisoners that gave birth to a boom in public and private prison construction. On any given day, there are 2.3 million persons in America incarcerated and almost all of them will be released.

Each year 656,000 persons will return home from state and federal institutions with about two-thirds of them ending up behind bars again. Ellis Cose states: "Every

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[84] Andrew Skotnicki, *Religion and the Development of the American Penal* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 2000), 2.

[85] Franklin and Moss Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 545.

[86] Ibid.

movement has its seminal moment—when an insight patently obvious in retrospect begins to come clearly into focus."[87] Cose, in this article, suggests that such a moment took place for prisoner re-entry. Guru Jeremy Travis, who at the time was the director of the National Institute of Justice, was asked a simple question by Attorney General Janet Reno, "What are we doing about all the people coming out of prison? No one had a clue.[4] The search for answers subsequently spawned a host of initiatives that may have fundamentally altered how society dealt with people who have served time."[88] Cose then quoted two-trail blazers in the re-entry movement, Edward Davis the top cop in Lowell, Massachusetts, who watched crime dramatically rise in the mid 90s. They adopted a two-part solution to this problem: The first was the warning, "we are watching you."[89] The second part of this effort was an offer to connect ex-prisoners with services to help them get on their feet. The second person Cose cited in his article, Connecticut State Rep. William Dyson, an appropriations committee chair, saw how expensive and wasteful it was to warehouse people. He also had endured the agony of having a son serve hard time, which gave him a real understanding of the barriers that ex-offenders faced when they returned home. Cose quotes Dyson, stating

> Prisoners generally lose all form of identification while inside, which cripples their ability to function outside. When released, they are prohibited from associating with other felons, so those with relatives with records often cannot go home. They are essentially barred from certain professions, and from receiving food stamps, housing subsidies and certain school loans. They in

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[87] Ellis Cose. *MSNBC Newsweek National News* 24 April 2006 <http//www. Msnbc.msn.com/id/12334540/site/newsweek/? GT1=7938>, 9/19/07.

[88] Ibid., 1.

[89] Ibid., 2.

> short, enter "a kind of never-land that encourage them to go back to doing what they were doing."[90]

This acknowledgement of the reality of the problems facing ex-offenders has now been accepted and has found its way to the Republican Party's agenda. President George W. Bush proposed an initiative in his state of the union address in 2004 called The Second Chance Act. It was introduced in the Senate by Judiciary chairman Arlen Specter and is working its way through the congressional process with Democratic and surprisingly Republican support. Cose quotes Nancy Levigne of the Urban Institute, who noted,

> Many of the ideas called "re-entry" used to be called "rehabilitation." But rehabilitation became "a dirty word to most Republicans," which led to cutbacks in educational opportunities and virtually every other humanizing influence in prison. " 'Re-entry' doesn't sound soft on crime," says Levigne.[91]

The flaw most re-entry programs have is they tend to engage the offender at release and the second flaw is a failure to address public policy decisions that have led so many young people into prison. The design of this re-entry program addresses these weaknesses and has been engaging inmates behind the walls for the last seven years through bi-weekly bible studies and bi-monthly worship services.

We are confronted by the images of competing groups standing outside of the state prison walls at most executions. Both groups are religious; one group is supportive of the death penalty, while the other group is in opposition to the death penalty. These groups do not have an impact on what is occurring inside those walls.

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[90] Ibid., 3.

[91] Ibid., 4.

There are four penal institutions within fifty miles of our church: Lebanon Correctional Institution and Lebanon Camp in Lebanon, Ohio is twenty-five miles from our location; London Correctional in London, Ohio is fifty-one miles from our location; Warren Correctional Institution Lebanon, Ohio is twenty-four miles from our location; and Dayton Correctional Institution and Montgomery Pre-release Center, in Dayton, Ohio is six miles from our location.

The African American population in the United States is twelve percent; fifty percent of the penal population is Black. In the 2000 census, the population of the state of Ohio was 11,353,140, out of which 1,288,359 are African American.

During the year 2001, there were 19,721 new persons incarcerated in the state of Ohio; more than half of those in state confinement were persons of African descent. Of the 19,721 inmates, 17,334 are males and 2,387 are female. Of the male group, 10,482 were African American, with 8, 886 whites. The remaining inmate population breaks down in the following ways: White Hispanic with 256; Black Hispanic with 74; Native American with 11; Asian with 8; and others with 6. Of these numbers, Montgomery County remanded 994 persons into state custody. Neighboring Hamilton County remanded 1,239 persons. The activity that sent persons into state custody breaks down as follows: Crimes against the person, which may or may not include sex offenses, 1,239; burglary offenses 1,505; and miscellaneous property offenses were 3,343 but the majority of these people newly incarcerated are there on drug offenses.[92] The state has so many persons locked up that they are now building new prisons to relieve the pressure of overcrowding. Ohio currently ranks fourth in the nation in new prison construction.

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[92] Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. http:/www.drc.state.oh.us/web/Reports/factsheet/January%202006.pdpf Accessed date 9/19/07.

Zachary R. Dowdy, in his article "How U.S. Prison Systems Make Minority Communities Pay" compared state-by-state the number of Black men in prison vis-à-vis higher education. The article reveals, "In Ohio, for example, 38 times as many African-American men were added to the prison system than to higher education (17,300 to 452) between 1980 and 2000." The report further indicates that 20% of the children of the men they studied had a deterioration of their behaviors after their fathers' imprisonment.

The Church has to respond to the critical issues confronting the community, particularly poor education and crime. John Hope Franklin suggests "that a plan was developed shortly after the civil war to keep African Americans in conditions similar to slavery."[93] Since the passage of civil-rights legislation, there have been some changes in the social status of African Americans. African Americans have unfettered access to most public accommodations and employment opportunities. However, the old racial attitudes of superiority that have been embraced by some European Americans are on the rise. They became more pronounced during the early days of President Ronald Reagan and Vice-President George Bush, who pushed a right-wing conservative agenda that was unsympathetic to the poor. In John Hope Franklin's book, *From Slavery to Freedom*, President Reagan instructed the director of his transition team, Edward Meese, that no more than one black would be appointed to posts in his new cabinet. He added that Reagan was committed to putting blacks in nontraditional roles. He also observed that the new president's staff would have no black appointees. President Reagan left the Civil Rights Commission in danger of extinction by firing commissioners Berry, Ramirez, and Saltzman. During President Reagan's years in the office and, continued under presidents George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush, the courts have stacked with conservative

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[93] Franklin and Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 255.

judges who are committed to a strict constructionist interpretation of the constitution. The effects of this narrow interpretive view would reverse hard earned rights won during the civil rights movement.

The African American community has a negative view of law enforcement because of police misconduct. The cornerstone of the efforts to preserve Jim Crow laws and slavery was the use of the justice system. Former slaves and their descendents were dissuaded from participating in the political process.

Jamie Fellner and Marc Mauer report that this system is still is in place in eleven states in America. They state:

> About 4 million people in the United States, including 1.4 million Black men (13 percent of the adult male Black population has, currently or permanently lost their right to vote as a result of a felony conviction, according to Sentencing Project data). The center, which teamed up with New York City- based Human Rights Watch to produce the 1998 report 'Losing The Vote: The Impact of Felony Disenfranchisement Laws in the United States, could not provide figures for disenfranchised women.

Gail Russell Chaddock, staff writer for the *Christian Science Monitor*, reports that figures released by the Justice Department indicate 5.6 million Americans are in prison or have served time there. Chaddock states: "The impact of incarceration does not end with the sentence. Former inmates can be excluded from receiving public assistance, living in public housing, or receiving financial aid for college. Ex-felons are prohibited from voting in many states. With the increased use of background checks—especially since 9/11—they may be permanently locked out of jobs in many professions, including education, child care, driving a bus, or working in a nursing home."[94] The inescapable

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[94] Gail Russel Chaddock, *The Christian Science Monitor* 2/4/06 http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0818/p02s01-usju.html 2/19/06.

reality is troublesome at best. Many offenders who are incarcerated and have served their time will return home to a wounded community. In this current social and political climate, the church has to step forward by implementing programs directed at ex-offenders reentering society. Chaddock suggests that, if current trends continue, it would mean that African American males would have a one in three chance of going to prison. The church has to refocus its energies on the systemic issues that imperil our communities. The denigration of the African American family, black on black crime, and the role of law enforcement in the urban community may determine prison rolls all across America.

Because there are many people who have been wrongfully convicted for crimes they themselves did not commit, we should also take a look at the role of the courts. In light of historic evidence, the justice system has been used as a tool of racial repression and oppression. The church has to be willing to stand with those who have gone through the judicial process in order for them to experience a healthy start.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

The writer of this project views the Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church as a microcosm of the Dayton, Ohio community. After eight years of ministry behind the institutional walls, the question confronting this community of faith is, how can we be more effective in ministry to ex-offenders.

The Outcome

It was anticipated that the following outcome would be realized through this ministry model:

1. Participants will begin to understand the challenges that ex-offenders endure after release.
2. The church will begin to understand how ex-offenders view the church and how they feel the church can help them.
3. The church will begin to explore how it views ex-offenders, confronts its fears, and attitudes of unforgiveness and explore the opportunities for ministry.

The research model in this study was qualitative. This is a soft scientific approach that will measure the effectiveness of the assumptions and values this project attempts to influence. The tools used were twelve sermons to prepare the congregation for the

project, pre and post survey questionnaires, workshop presenters, panelists and evaluation forms. Generally, the qualitative method in research will generate rich, detailed and valid data that will allow for a deeper understanding of the context.[1]

Design

In preparation for the implementation of the ministry model, twelve sermons were preached, as follows:

1. Dysfunctional families are the by-products of dysfunctional parents.
2. Dishonesty and deception inside the family will reveal itself in society.
3. There is always some one slicker than you.
4. You will reap what you sow.
5. In the midst of desperation, you may encounter the divine.
6 Don't fail to look beneath the veil.
7 Babies' mama drama.
8. Favoritism in the family produces bitterness, jealousy, pain and separation.
9. Get better, not bitter.
10. God is with you even in prison.
11. From the prison to the palace.
12. Seeing your part in God's plan.

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[1] Jackie Baston Lecture notes, "Qualitative and Quantitative Research Approaches," United Theological Seminary, Aug. 2006.

Public invitations were extended on three consecutive Sunday mornings at Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church for the congregation and community to participate in this research project.

Eleven yes/no questions were developed for pre and post-test evaluation. This information was analyzed by compounding the yes/no answers by a mathematical formula into percentages for determining congregational attitude. When the data was coded, the major themes that came out of the research were: 1) the control group participants strongly agreed that the ex-offenders should play a role in the rehabilitation of ex-offenders, 2) the members of Harris Memorial CME Church believe the church should be actively involved in prison ministry, 3) participants were unanimous in their view that the church should play a role in political action and social justice, 4) a large majority of respondents favor the active recruitment of ex-offenders, 5) there were mixed results on where the ministry should be housed, 25% were against housing it in the church building, 6) one of the recurring themes was concern about the type of offense; congregants were less enthusiastic about persons who committed sexual offenses or violent crimes. When comparing the results of responses of the control group to the pre and post survey results, the findings revealed that the overwhelming attitude of the control group during the pre and post-tests remain unchanged. The attitude of the membership was in concert with the control group. A statistician was engaged to insure that the calculations were interpreted correctly and to review and validate the collected data. The workshops were held on Friday night and Saturday Morning. There was a break for a free noonday meal followed by an afternoon seminar. The project sought to take a selected group of persons through a process that would make them more accepting of

persons returning home from prison. Two workshops and one seminar were conducted. A training manual was also developed for congregational usage.

All three of the writer's expected outcomes were met as a result of the personal testimonials given by the ex-offenders who participated in the workshop, coupled with the interviews and the workshop evaluations. The church members clearly understood the challenges ex-offenders face after release, e.g. problems restoring family relationships, finding jobs and housing and establishing mentorship relationships.

During these interviews with the ex-offenders, it became clear to the participants that the church could play a vital role in their re-entry by providing counseling, education, housing, spiritual influence, and biblical teaching. Some of the preconceived notions and fears were abated after the workshop encounter with the three ex-offenders who participated. However, the church never bought into accepting those who have committed sexual offenses or violent crimes. Therefore, it would not be advisable for persons who committed these types of offenses to be included in the outreach efforts of the church, due to the large number of children and elderly parishioners.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Hypothesis

The writer of this project views the Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church as a microcosm of the Dayton, Ohio community. After 8 years of working in prison ministry, the writer believes that the question that should be answered is how the Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church can become more effective in ministry to ex-offenders.

Outcomes

It is anticipated that the following outcomes will be realized through this ministry model:

1. Participants will begin to understand the challenges that ex-offenders endure after release.
2. The church will begin to understand how ex-offenders view the church and how they feel the church can help them.
3. The church will begin to explore how it views ex-offenders, confronts its fears and attitudes of unforgiveness and explores the opportunities for ministry.

The writer began this project with a passion to help those recently released from prison. It was his desire that the church assists ex-offenders and offer a viable support

system that might empower ex-offenders to experience a smoother transition back into society. The writer had observed friends and family members who had fallen victim to the draw of easy money and found themselves incarcerated behind prison walls. Upon release from prison, these persons' economic, educational, and social circumstances were perhaps comparable to citizens of undeveloped nations. These experiences with close friends and family members have made this writer very sensitive and compassionate to the plight of ex-offenders. The writer also sympathized with the great difficulty that they experienced in obtaining public housing, state aid, and federal funds for higher education, which leaves many with few acceptable options other than returning to a life of criminality. The writer's spouse is a chaplain in the Ohio state correctional system serving at Lebanon Correctional Center (LeCI) in Lebanon, Ohio. LeCI is a two-security level facility level 1 and 3; Ohio uses a five level security classification to indicate the security risk for its inmates. Level 1 indicates the inmates in that area are a minimum security risk; level 2, medium security; level 3, close security; level 4, maximum security and level 5, administrative maximums—an inmate classified as extremely dangerous to himself or others and is in segregation or isolated from others.

The operational budget for the Lebanon Correctional Institution is $43,113,096.29, which comes to a per inmate cost per day of $53.76.[1] The institution's population as of January 2006 was 2,283. The African American population is 1,238 the white population is 1,025. There are no Hispanics, but there are twenty persons who are listed as other. This institution had no escapees or walk-aways as of 2007. There are 156 inmates classified as level 1 security risk, they are housed at the Lebanon camp. There

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[1] Lebanon Correctional Institution http://www.drc.state.oh.us/Public/leci.htm, Accessed February 1, 2007.

are 2,127 persons housed in the main facility who are classified as level 3 security risks. All information referring to Lebanon Correctional Institution comes from the Department of Corrections.[2]

This writer has presided at the funeral services of two young men killed by persons recently released from prison. These incidents have helped the writer to realize that prisons do not always provide the necessary rehabilitation to prepare ex-offenders for life in mainstream society. After having to comfort the bereaved family and friends of victims and then ironically consoling the family members of the perpetrators of the crimes, this writer understands the total spectrum of grief of both the victim and the perpetrators' family. This writer has acted as a big brother for the perpetrators' children who were confused and unsure of the validity of the alleged crimes. These children are either disturbed by the crime allegedly committed by their family member or angry at the judicial system for the incarceration of their family member, who often maintains their innocence. The writer's wife, through her work as a prison chaplain, has reinforced the writer's belief that one way to cure recidivism is to introduce prisoners to Christianity. This writer has witnessed first hand prisoners whose lives have been transformed once they have embraced Christianity. These experiences, often called jailhouse conversions, have often proved to be an important factor in curbing the recidivism rate. If the recidivism rate of ex-offenders is going to decline, prisoners will need assistance when they return home from prison. This writer believes that the Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church can be the springboard in the city of Dayton, Ohio to cure the recidivism rate.

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[2] Ibid.

The overall assumption informing this passion is the belief that God is a God of second chances. It is in light of this belief that this project is embarked upon. The context of this model of ministry is the Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. The invitation was given to 100 to 150 persons in attendance during the morning services for three weeks before the event. The writer anticipated more participation from the congregation than were present, but the persons who attended are a reflection of the community concerns for those returning home.

Introduction For the Opening Workshop

Pastor Earl Hudson to Participants:

I would like to thank you for your participation in this workshop. Your participation will not only help pastor in securing the fulfillment of a dream, but also the launching of a project that will help persons coming home from prison to have a healthy start and cut the recidivism rate.

"Tonight, our goal is to let you hear from a person who has been through the system and has returned home and has some definite expectations and ideas about what the church could and should be doing for those returning home. It is our hope that you will hear this brother with an open mind and heart, and then interact with him. Please take notes and write out any questions you may have. Remember, we will have a seminar tomorrow to resolve any unanswered questions."

With these words, the president of Room Prison Ministry, Sister Debra Judkins introduced the first presenter, [redacted] who shared his testimony concerning his

criminal behavior as a two-time loser as a bank robber who was converted to Islam and later back to Christianity by a simple reading of the bible. His witness was strong concerning the deliverance found in the word of God. He then shared with power how inmates viewed the church, and how the church could be a blessing to them. After a discussion period and refreshments, we ended the night with prayer.

Introduction for the Second Workshop

Pastor Earl Hudson to Participants:

Good morning and welcome to our second workshop. Our focus this morning will be on determining what roll the church should play in this process. Are we a redemptive and forgiving community? Are we supposed to seek for the lost? How do we really feel about persons who have broken the law? Are we judgmental? Are we really welcoming of ex-offenders? Are we afraid of ex-offenders? These are issues we should explore as a congregation. Our speaker for this session is U.S. Senior District Judge Walter H. Rice of the United States District Court of Ohio. Judge Rice stated, "It used to be that one of the trades that was taught to inmates was how to be a barber or an embalmer or a beautician. Now former felons can't get a license to be a barber, beautician or an embalmer." This was the start of a most inspiring call to action and awareness concerning the social and political barriers in place to hinder a healthy start.

Judge Walter H. Rice's Lecture:

Judge Rice pointed out that the number of people going to prison in Ohio and across the country continues to rise each year. The number of people coming home from

prison rises as well. He estimates that 1500 former inmates released from prison return to Montgomery County each year and another 150 return to the county after serving federal sentences. Judge Rice said the community has to pay a lot more attention to reintegrating those people into society and integration that is already difficult is made harder by all the restrictions the law places on released prisoners.

"Most people are aware of the restrictions the law places on sex offenders. They have to register their address and avoid living near schools and other areas where children congregate, but not many people know that Ohio has about 400 collateral sanctions that keep felons from holding certain professional licenses and deprives them of the right to vote along with other civil rights. The pervasive mindset is that anyone that has been to prison is a bad person and doesn't deserve a break. In essence in our system of criminal justice, the debt to society has not been paid until you're in your grave. Don't get me wrong, people ought to be punished," Judge Rice said. "But while you're punishing, you have to deal with what caused the criminal behavior in the first place."

Judge Rice's presentation had the participants' full attention and the facts he shared were eye opening and thought provoking. The session ended with prayer and a grand time of eating and talking about what had been shared.

Seminar

At the conclusion of the meal and the afternoon devotional, the seminar participants were presented: [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted]. These men were all ex-offenders with serious convictions who have returned to society, have good

paying jobs, and have stayed free from criminal behavior for a good number of years. Some of the men came from dysfunctional backgrounds, yet they bravely shared their stories and the glorious news of their conversions and the challenges that have confronted them since their return home. They shared their joys and sorrows and addressed many of our concerns. The question and answer period was very spirited. At the end of this session, the post-test was completed and returned. The day ended with song and prayer. The song was led with great joy for what God had done and for the commitment each of the participants made.

Re-Entry Workshop—Educating the Church Community

The workshop hosted by Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church under the leadership of Pastor Earl Hudson was held the evening of Friday, March 16, 2007 and continued on Saturday morning March 17, 2007. There were a total of three sessions, Friday evening was session one, Saturday morning was session two and Saturday afternoon was session three. All three sessions were enlightening and proved to be informative as each session presented a wealth of insight into the ever-increasing need of our nation's ex-offender population.

Having been exposed to prison ministry as a volunteer team member participating in worship services within several of Ohio's institutions, the writer had been exposed to the realities of the need that exists for those offenders who have served their time and returned to the communities where they were residents. However, many in the churches are clueless to the variety of need that exists for ex-offenders. It has been made quite

evident that part of the solution to this overwhelming problem is that of educating the church community to this area of concern. We must make our churches aware of the problems. They must be shown how they may have access to resources that can be utilized in the effort of assisting those ex-offenders needing our help, as well as teaching the church to be wise, loving and forgiving. Those ex-offenders who have been reported as having shown improvement and are striving to make a better life for themselves certainly deserve a second chance, a brand new start to make it right for themselves, their families and their communities. Many of them will do well, or shall I even conclude, many of whom have done well, when all the proper resources are/were in place.

The workshops were very successful in reiterating the need for the church to take an active role in caring for those who are incarcerated and ex-offenders. Jesus our Lord has challenged us with this task when He stated with a desire to bring conviction – "I was in prison and you did not visit me."[3] There were those who had difficulty remembering Jesus' imprisonment and how they could have missed the opportunity to minister to the Lord in His hour of need. They asked the question, "when did we see you in prison and did not visit you?" Jesus so lovingly responded, "When you did not visit the least of one of these, you therefore did not visit me"; Matthew 25:45. To those whom He had spoken, it seemed as though He spoke of them as unbelievers and quickly announced in verse 46 their judgment after reminding them of their negligence to others in need. Thus, the overwhelming nature of this workshop was to recap our Lord's challenge to be the church. In doing so, we must take an active role in assisting our brothers and sisters in need.

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[3] Matthew 25:43

Throughout the workshop, we heard from presenters who had at one time in their lives been in need of receiving forgiveness, as they too, were ex-offenders. Those presenters, Bro. [redacted], Bro. [redacted], and Bro. [redacted], shared their testimonies, which spoke volumes about what God can do with a vessel willing to change that has the support of those persons willing and available to assist them in their time of need. These men expressed the need for the church to distribute its talents, skills and resources to assist with mentoring, employment, counseling, education, housing and spiritual needs. Today, each of these men is leading a successful productive life, all because someone answered the Lord's challenge to help a brother turn his life around. Somebody took a chance and believed in them, giving them a new lease on life.

It was also an honor to have as one of our workshop presenters, the Honorable Judge Walter Rice. Judge Rice again put the challenge before us to get involved with the re-entry processes. He brought to our attention various statistics which created concern about the large number of ex-offenders to be released into our communities in the near future and how, if there are not those provisions in place to help the ex-offender make a successful transition back in to their communities, the revolving door of crime awaits them. This, he mentioned, is all too well a reality for many because they do not have a support system, they do not have the resources to their disposal giving them an incentive to make a healthy start over. Many return to the same old baggage of no or little education, lack of employment-attractive skills, low self-image and defeated mentality that says "I'm not going to be nothing, do nothing of worth, so why try." They look at the odds stacked against them and refrain from even trying. Therefore, they revert to the lifestyle they were familiar with and many of them return to a correctional institution.

Judge Rice reminded that "the church" is those whom our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ equipped to do effective ministry. He stated we should never expect or even look to the government to do what God has commanded the church to do. He reminded us that the Lord has equipped us with the abilities and resources to represent Him well as His ministers, and therefore we must answer the call to be about our ministry. He advised us that everyone can and should help in some way.

Many of us do not own businesses, but we know someone who does; many do not own property, but we know persons who do. We may not even be licensed to counsel or to teach, but we know individuals who have these skills who are looking for ways to use their skills to serve the community to a greater capacity. So, if we do nothing more than inform those individuals with the skills and resources of how they can be a blessing in this area of need, we have accomplished much, for perhaps many of those individuals will be inspired to use their talents in this area of opportunity.

Another startling thought Judge Rice challenged us with was that of our misconception regarding the correctional institutions as agents of rehabilitation. We were advised by Judge Rice that the median stay of an inmate is only three years, so by the time an inmate completes his time in a correctional institution, there has not been enough time spent with that individual to allow rehabilitation to occur. There are a combination of reasons for that, one of which is the fact that our prisons do not have the manpower or much needed resources themselves to make rehabilitation a reality. Therefore, without the assistance of outside resources, such as private and faith-based organizations coming alongside the institutions to assist with mentoring, education, and counseling, many of the men and women who could be helped by such programs will not receive the

assistance because resources are limited. Judge Rice let us in on a secret. Re-entry processes begin for an inmate before they are even sentenced. He said that before sentencing, each person has to have a plan for re-entry into society.

We were advised to take note of various areas that need to be strengthened so that re-entry can be a less threatening event:

1. **Community** — most inmates will return to the community in which they lived. How can we strengthen that community to be supportive and allow the ex-offender a second chance with housing?
2. **Families** — How can we come alongside the families as they deal with the absence of husbands/wives, dads/mothers, brothers/sisters, sons/daughters? How can we help that family cope with the absence of the family breadwinner? There is much strain and stress on families of incarcerated persons, how can we assist them with the pain of such circumstances?
3. **Employment** — how can we make it advantageous for employers to hire ex-offenders so that becomes a win-win opportunity for both the employer and the prospective employee?
4. **Faith-based communities** — what an era we live in today in which government entities are calling upon faith-based organizations to assist with the re-entry processes. It appears even the government officials understand all too well the power that lies within the wisdom of the faith-based community to affect change.

This workshop was just one of many as we are targeting the church community and educating the church community of the pressing needs that could become barriers to

a successful re-entry process. As I reflect upon the many challenges and opportunities for the church to serve ex-offenders, I understand the task is overwhelming for a small few. But if we can engage a village to unite their efforts, the opportunities can be achieved without fail.

Harris Memorial Church and its pastor and congregation partnered with one of its evangelical ministries, R.O.O.M Prison Fellowship under the direction of Rev. Rosie Hudson, to make this a successful workshop. We all look forward to future workshops that will unite our churches in an effort to be a blessing to those who are in need.

At the beginning of Session One, a pre-workshop survey was completed by all participants. This survey was designed to get an overview of what was understood about re-entry processes prior to the information shared during the workshop. At the close of the workshop, another survey was presented to each participant to gain insight of any changes of knowledge and whether the workshop had achieved its goal of educating the church about matters of re-entry for ex-offenders.

The overall consensus of the surveys and feedback of the participants was that of great success in achieving the goal to educate and communicate the need for resources and assistance in this area of need. Many persons have offered to help in ways they felt their skills would be best utilized.

Friday, March 16, 2007

Rev. Earl Hudson, Sr., Convener

Pre-Survey Results

Control Group

(Total # of respondents = 12)

1. Have you or someone in your family or circle of friends been incarcerated?

   Yes – 12 No- 0

2. How did you relate to them when they were released?

   Rarely- 1 Never-0 Often- 8 Occasionally – 3

3. Should the church be involved in helping Ex-offenders?

   Yes- 12 No- 0

   Why?

   - Jesus says so.
   - The church can be instrumental in affecting their hearts for change that will be enduring.
   - The church is about helping everyone.
   - If the church doesn't help, then who will?
   - Because they are human and deserve another chance.
   - It's a Christian duty to forgive and to help those who can't help themselves.
   - People need support and encouragement when they have difficulty in life.
   - To help them develop a relationship with God. This relationship can help them re-establish themselves in society.
   - The church should be the one place where they know they'll get help and be received.

4. Should the church encourage its members to actively recruit ex-offenders as members?

Yes – 11 No- 1

Why?

- To help them see the light that Christians do care
- Jesus makes the difference, recruitment and us sharing with all our soul whether you know they are offenders or not.
- The most positive people to interact with
- This is a part of our Christian duty, to bring them to Christ.
- Who needs to be saved?
- Because God loves them and it is the Great Commission.
- I think that the church is a great place to get started.
- It's part of our mission as a representative to Christ and everyone should be offered salvation and redemption.
- God is a God of second chances.

6. Do you know of any ex-offenders who are or have been members of Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church?

Yes- 5 No – 7

7. Do you feel comfortable around ex-offenders?

Yes – 11 No – 1

Comments

- Most times.
- They are human like me and I trust the love of Christ in me to make a difference.
- Depends on their attitude

- Sometimes it all depends on their actions.
- I feel that if I show love and friendship, it will be returned.
- They are humans who made mistakes
- Sometimes
- Sometimes. I'm a little reserved if I know they have committed a violent crime.
- I was once one.
- Because we are trying to help them and tell them because we all make mistakes.

7. Do you feel men and women should be incarcerated after they are Convicted of a crime?

   Yes – 10 Yes and No – 1 Undecided – 1

   Comments:

   - Depending on the nature of the crime
   - It all depends on the individual. Some need help rather than being incarcerated.
   - They might learn from it.
   - It depends

8. Should Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church be involved in Prison ministry?

   Yes – 12 No- 0

Why?

- We are the church. The body of Christ.
- Jesus speaks of the need to visit those who are imprisoned.
- Everyone should reach out. All churches.
- To save souls, and bring them to Christ to be ministered to
- Outreach and teaching experience
- It's an excellent way for the church to reach out to the community.
- It is God's work.

9. Should prison ministry be housed in the church or be incorporated into some other Para-church organization?

Yes – 9 No- 2 Undecided – 1

Comments:

- It helps, teaching is vital to them. Bring them to Christ.
- Because the church needs to have Branch out ministries

10. Should Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church be involved in political action and social justice issues?

Yes- 12 No- 0

Why?

- We should speak for Christ and get involved.
- Our united votes can make a difference and effect change.
- A person's entire environment should be considered.
- To have a voice
- To give its members a voice and experience

- We need to be involved in social justice issues so we can shape laws.
- Many church people are great role models who are equipped with the skills to help those in need. Our mission is to reach out and bring the unsaved to Christ.
- I think we should try to help everyone.
- The church should serve as a change agent and a voice for the people
- The church has power.

11. Do you agree that once a person has served his or her time, they should be allowed to be fully productive participants in this society?

Yes - 11 No- 0 Yes and No – 1

Why?

- They have served their time. They need a chance to prove themselves.
- Because they've done their time, paid their debt. They deserve a second chance.
- Hopefully, our prisons would be better at reaching the inmates with behavioral, educational and social skills.
- Because they done their time.
- The question answers itself. Debt has been paid. Nothing else should be expected of that person.
- They paid their debt.
- Everybody deserves a second chance. People make mistakes.
- God forgives us and we should forgive others.

- However, some consideration should be given to the activities they would be allowed to participate in during their reform/rehab., e.g., One would not want a child molester leading a children's Sunday School class.
- The debt is paid.
- It all depends on the individual. All have sinned and fallen short of the
- Glory of God. Saved by Grace.

Analysis of Findings:

Based on the results of the survey, the prevailing attitude of the control group is as follows:

1. 100% of the respondents have had a friend or family member who have been incarcerated.
2. More than 66% of the respondents related to ex-offenders often after they were released.
3. 100% of respondents believe the church should play an active role in the rehabilitation of ex-offenders. The consensus suggests that it is our Christian duty, part of our charge.
4. 11/12 (91.7%) believe that the church should actively recruit ex-offenders as part of the outreach ministry.
5. 58% of the participants were not aware of any church members who had been ex-offenders.

6. Most of the respondents (91.7%) are comfortable around ex-offenders. Only one respondent expressed concern about potentially violent offenders.

7. 17% of the participants are unsure about whether all offenders should be incarcerated while 83% believe that incarceration is the right punishment.

8-9. 100% of respondents believe Harris Memorial should be involved in prison ministry. However there was disagreement on whether the ministry should be housed at the church or at some other location. (75% in favor and 25% against it).

10. Control group participants were unanimous in their belief that the church should play a role in political action and social justice.

11. 11/12 participants believe that once the time has been served ex-offenders should be given every chance to become productive members of society. They believe that they deserve a second chance.

Prison Ministry Workshop

Saturday, March 17, 2007

Rev. Earl Hudson, Sr., Convener

Post-Survey Results

Control Group

(Total # of respondents = 13)

12. Have you or someone in your family or circle of friends been incarcerated?

Yes – 12 No- 0

13. How did you relate to them when they were released?

Rarely- 0 Never-0 Often- 9 Occasionally – 4

14. Should the church be involved in helping Ex-offenders?

Yes- 13 No- 0

Why?

- To advocate on their behalf
- To help them become useful citizens.
- It's necessary for families to continue
- To get them on the right track.

15. Should the church encourage its members to actively recruit ex-offenders as members?

Yes – 12 No- 1

Why?

- There are many ways they can participate that can result in positive things for the church, their family and the community.
- To help them become re-established
- Because it could have been me in trouble.
- So they will know God.
- Our job is to save souls

16. Do you know of any ex-offenders who are or have been members of Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church?

Yes- 7 No – 6

17. Do you feel comfortable around ex-offenders?

Yes – 12 No – 0 No Answer - 1

Comments

- However, I do use wisdom in their company.
- I take each person at his or her own weight.
- Give them respect and expect respect from them.
- Sometimes it all depends on their actions.
- I feel that if I show love and friendship, it will be returned.
- They are humans who made mistakes
- Sometimes, I rarely have an opportunity to interact with them

18. Do you feel men and women should be incarcerated after they are Convicted of a crime?

Yes – 11 No – 0 Undecided – 2

Comments:

- Depends on the crime
- With reservations over the severity of the crime

19. Should Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church be involved in Prison ministry?

Yes – 12 No- 0 No response - 1

Why?

- Jesus taught that we should.
- It would be a great outreach to fill a void in our society.
- It is needed.

- If I have helped somebody, then my living has not been in vain.
- In a mentorship role our goal is to help those in need.

20. Should prison ministry be housed in the church or be incorporated into some other Para-church organization?

Yes – 10 No- 1 No response - 2

Comments:

- Should be housed outside the church.
- Wherever space allows
- It should be a noticeable part of church operation
- Space can be found

21. Should Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church be involved in political action and social justice issues?

Yes- 12 No- 0 No response - 1

Why?

- As advocates and pioneers
- It takes everyone
- For experience and witness
- We are called to help society.

22. Do you agree that once a person has served his or her time, they should be allowed to be fully productive participants in this society?

Yes - 13 No- 0

Why?

- To demonstrate their redemption.
- It takes the burden off the state.
- They have served their tie as set by the legal system.
- Sentence served, debt paid, calls for honoring by the community.
- God is a God of second chances
- Everyone deserves a second chance.

Analysis of Findings:

Based on the results of the survey, the prevailing attitude of the control group is as follows:

12. 100% of the respondents have had a friend or family member who has incarcerated. (Consistent with the pre-survey response)
13. More than 69% of the respondents related to ex-offenders often after they were released. (Pre-survey response was 66%)
14. 100% of respondents believe the church should play an active role in the rehabilitation of ex-offenders. The consensus suggests that it is our Christian duty, part of our charge. (Consistent with the pre-survey response)
15. 12/13 (92%) believe that the church should actively recruit ex-offenders as part of the outreach ministry. (Consistent with the pre-survey response)
16. 46% of the participants were not aware of any church members who had been ex-offenders. (There was a 12% variance in this score from the pre-survey)

17. Most of the respondents (92%) are comfortable around ex-offenders. Only one respondent expressed concern about potentially violent offenders. (Consistent with the pre-survey response).
18. 15% of the participants are unsure about whether all offenders should be incarcerated while 85% believe that incarceration is the right punishment. (Reflects a 2% increase in those who believe incarceration is the right punishment.)

19-20 92% of respondents believe Harris Memorial should be involved in prison ministry. However there was disagreement on whether the ministry should be housed at the church or at some other location. (77% are in favor and 23% against it). (Consistent with pre-survey results)

21. 92% of Control group participants believe that the church should play a role in political action and social justice. (Consistent with pre-survey results)
22. 100 % participants believe that once the time has been served ex-offenders should be given every chance to become productive members of society. They believe that they deserve a second chance. (Consistent with pre-survey results)

CONCLUSION

When comparing responses from the pre-survey and the post survey among control group members, the findings suggest that the overwhelming attitude of the control group remained unchanged. There were slight differences in some of the percentages in select questions, but this was largely due to the fact that there was one additional person

in the post-survey than the pre-survey. The control group believes that Harris Memorial CME Church should be involved in prison ministry and re-entry assistance for ex-offenders.

Harris Memorial C.M. E. Church

Non-Workshop Participants

Sunday, March 18, 2007

Rev. Earl Hudson, Sr., Convener

Survey Results

Attitude of the Membership

(Total # of respondents = 29)

1. Have you or someone in your family or circle of friends been incarcerated?

   Yes – 25 No- 4

2. How did you relate to them when they were released?

   Rarely- 1 Never-0 Often- 14 Occasionally – 7 No Response -7

3. Should the church be involved in helping Ex-offenders?

   Yes- 28 No- 0 Don't Know- 1

   Why?

   - They need the Lord.
   - We all need love and understanding.
   - Talk to them and help them find a job.
   - So lost souls can be saved.
   - Everybody needs help. (X2)
   - Everybody needs somebody to believe in them.

- Everyone deserves a second chance. (X4)
- Because they need someone to care for them too.
- Church is for them.

4. Should the church encourage its members to actively recruit ex-offenders as members?

   Yes – 27 No- 0 No response - 2

   Why?

   - To introduce the ex-offender to salvation who may in turn introduce another person to salvation.
   - God loves everybody.
   - Teach them the way to go.
   - Because it's bringing them to Jesus.
   - They are people too.
   - A lot of ex-offenders might not know.
   - Yes. Give them a chance. Maybe we can turn their lives around. They need the Lord.
   - With caution

5. Do you know of any ex-offenders who are or have been members of Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church?

   Yes- 9 No – 20

6. Do you feel comfortable around ex-offenders?

   Yes – 23 No – 1 No response-5

Comments

- Some.
- It really depends on what they were incarcerated for.
- I try to love everyone.
- Depends on what the crime was.

7. Do you feel men and women should be incarcerated after they are convicted of a crime?

   Yes – 23 No – 2 Undecided – 1 No Response – 3

   Comments:

   - Depends on the crime and the severity of the offense (X2)
   - You do the crime, you do the time.

8. Should Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church be involved in prison ministry?

   Yes – 29 No- 0

   Why?

   - We need to help them. They need help.
   - To help introduce people to salvation.
   - There are too many African Americans incarcerated not to become involved.

9. Should prison ministry be housed in the church or be incorporated into some other Para-church organization?

   Yes – 21 No- 5 No Response 3

Comment:

- To closely monitor the program
- Their crime may to too serious.
- House it in some other organization.
- If you have qualified people over the program.

10. Should Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church be involved in political action and social justice issues?

Yes- 25 No- 1 No Response- 2 Undecided- 1

Why?

- They need to know other opinions.
- Yes. To meet the needs of African Americans.
- A person's entire environment should be considered.
- To have a voice

11. Do you agree that once a person has served his or her time, they should be allowed to be fully productive participants in this society?

Yes - 27 No- 0 No Response- 1 Undecided- 1

Why?

- We need all members especially African Americans to be productive.
- Only if they have changed.
- Some need that second chance.
- Because they paid their dues.
- We all make mistakes. Hopefully, they will learn from them
- With caution, depending on the crime.

- I agree as long as they are not sex offenders.
- Depends on why they were incarcerated

Analysis of Findings:

Based on the results of the survey, the prevailing attitude of the control group is as follows:

1. 86% of the respondents have had a friend or family member who has incarcerated.
2. More than 48% of the respondents related to ex-offenders often after they were released.
3. 97% of respondents believe the church should play an active role in the rehabilitation of ex-offenders. The consensus suggests that it is our Christian duty, part of our charge.
4. 27/29 (93%) believe that the church should actively recruit ex-offenders as part of the outreach ministry.
5. More than 2/3 (67%) of the participants were unaware of any church members who had been ex-offenders.
6. (79%) are comfortable around ex-offenders. 17% did not respond around ex-offenders or not.
7. 21% if the participants are unsure about whether all offenders should be incarcerated while 79% believe that incarceration is the right punishment.

8. 100% of respondents believe Harris Memorial should be involved in prison ministry.

9. However there was disagreement on whether the ministry should be housed at the church or at some other location. (72% in favor and 28% against it.10. 86% of the respondents believe the church should play a role in political action and social justice.

10. 27/29 participants believe that once the time has been served ex-offenders should be given every chance to become productive members of society.

Conclusion

The findings from the church membership are in concert with the attitude of the control group. Survey results (Question #8) suggest that 29/29 (100%) of the respondents believe that Harris Memorial CME Church should play an active role in the rehabilitation of ex-offenders and a large majority favor active recruitment of ex-offenders. Results also suggest that the church should be involved in political action and social justice within the community. The respondents were strong advocates for helping ex-offenders re-enter society and to become productive individuals.

Survey results for the membership reveal that more than 2/3 (67%) are unaware of any member who may have been incarcerated vs. 46% in the post control group. There also seems to be greater concern about housing the prison ministry in the church. 21% if these respondents disagreed with housing it at the church. This

group is concerned about the severity and the nature of the offense for specific offenders.

Re-Entry Workshop Evaluation Results

Control Group

Total # of Evaluations Returned=12

(Please note that one individual who completed a survey was not present for the Friday evening session.

Session #1 Friday, March 16, 2007 Speaker: Bro. Abdur-Rauf Rashid

a. How would you rate the overall presentation of this session?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
10	1	0	0	0

b. Information presented was practical and useful

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Comment	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10	1	0	0	0

c. How would you rate the speaker?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
10	1	0	0	0

Session #2 Saturday, Morning- March 17, 2007 Speaker: Honorable Judge Walter Rice

a. How would you rate the overall presentation of this session?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
9	3	0	0	0

b. Information presented was practical and useful

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Comment	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10	2	0	0	0

c. How would you rate the speaker?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
10	2	0	0	0

Session III Saturday Afternoon, March 17, 2007 Round Table Discussion

a. How would you rate this time of discussion?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
9	3	0	0	0

b. Clear and practical answers were provided for questions presented.

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Comment	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7	4	0	0	0

c. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the entire workshop (all 3 sessions)?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
10	2	0	0	0

d. Would you agree/disagree that additional workshops addressing the issues of ex-offenders be offered in the future?

Agree	Disagree
12	0

If you agree, how often do you feel they should be offered?

Annually Bi-annually Quarterly

Comments

- We need people who are willing to work. Why do we sit in church all year and don't have a willingness to help someone as the Bible insists.
- I enjoyed it.
- This was my first time ever being involved but I learned a lot. I'm not familiar with the system but very good session.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

As the researcher considered this topic, he was overwhelmed by the enormity and complexity of the issues confronted by ex-offenders and their families. Chuck Colson writes about his release from prison. He states:

> The sensations I felt upon release from prison on January 31, 1975, are as vivid to me now as if it all happened yesterday. For a moment I could reply. "I can't take it," I said at last. My senses were still numb four hours later when a smiling U.S. Marshall handed me the signed release form. We stood at the front gate of the barbed-wire enclosed prison compound at Fort Holabird in Baltimore, where I had spent the last part of my sentence. My wife, Patty, her eyes reddened, was there to drive me home. The protective mechanism inside me gradually released its iron grip. The shouts and waves of the 18 other inmates, mostly prized government catches from organized crime, told me that my prison ordeal was really over. I climbed into the front seat of our red station wagon and rubbed my hand along the smooth vinyl upholstery. Patty had to drive since my driver's license had expired. I became suddenly aware if the deprivations. I would not be able to vote, hold public office, practice law or obtain a number of state licenses denied to ex-prisoners. Some cities would require that I register at the local police station, as all felons must, when visiting. All this could be for the rest of my life unless the appropriate state governor chooses to wave the limitations.[1]

Colson, with these few words, relates the struggle he experienced after his time of incarceration he called a life sentence and for many, unlike Colson, it is a life filled with few options. Many wonder about the plight of the African American male in light of all the Christian churches in the community and all the other institutions, lodges, and social clubs that embrace the Christian ethic.

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[1] Charles W. Colson, *Life Sentence* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1979), 21-22.

Prison

> Why are there more brothers in prison than in college? Is prison cheaper? Is prison more effective? Why does America send more people to prison than any other country in the world except Russia? Did you know that 95% of the brothers in prison can't read beyond the sixth-grade reading level, never graduated from high school, were never given a course in African history, were on the corners throughout the night, and did not attend Sunday School? What can we learn from this? Why have criminologists dropped the word rehabilitation? Why was "monster," Cody Scott, freely allowed to teach brothers how to kill each other but was placed in solitary confinement when he became Sanyika Shakur and tried to teach brothers Africentricity and Black-on-Black love? Why did Nathan McCall receive thirty days for almost killing a Black male, but twelve years for robbing a White store with no injuries?[2]

When we survey African American history, we see the presence of strong African American males. We see names like Richard Allen and Absalom Jones who led the formation of the African Methodist Church, Peter Varick of the African Methodist Zion Church and a host of others who worked through the church to turn the tide of slavery. From the 1800s to the turn of the 20th century, black men overwhelmingly attended church, but the question is: where are they now?

In 1980, Kunjufu stated that he would return to the church after a six-year hiatus in which he thought that he could function without the Lord. He stated that over the past two decades he had been asking brothers who were not attending church what their reasons were. Kunjufu stated he had read many articles that postulated many theories, but he wanted an expanded and comprehensive study of why brothers don't go to church. So he asked brothers to complete a questionnaire in which he sought the following basic information, name, address, age, marital status, parental status, number of parents in

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[2] Jawanza Kunjufu, *Adam! Where Are You?* (Chicago, IL: African American Images, 1994), 44.

household, parental church status, educational background, etc. He also included the following questions: 1) Did you attend Sunday school? 2) Were you baptized? 3) If so, why did you leave the church? 4) Have you ever been witnessed to, excluding the Jehovah's witnesses? 5) Do you believe in God? 6) Do you believe in life after death?

Kunjufu stated his second objective was to bring some of those brothers together. They had an overnight retreat to discuss their questionnaires. The following is a list of the reasons given.

1. **Hypocrisy** - There was too much contradiction between what was being said in Church and what was being done in the community.
2. **Ego/Dictatorial** - Many men were irritated about always being told what the pastor said about this and what the pastor said about that. Many men said, " The pastor may be in charge of the church, but he is not in charge of this house. I pay the bills here, and what the pastor said does not count in this house."
3. **Faith-Submission** – Trust-Forgiveness-Angry at God. – Some men stop believing in God when death takes a loved one or a close friend. Others cannot identify with our Heavenly Father when they don't know or believe in their earthly father.
4. **Passivity** – Many brothers said, " I don't turn the other cheek, and I don't teach my sons to turn the other cheek." Can you imagine with all the violence going on in the community, me telling my son to "suck it up?" I tell my son what my father and uncle told me; if you don't fight, then you're getting two whippings, one from them and the other from me."

5. **Tithing** – Brothers have some great misunderstandings about how the church as an institution in the community applies its funds based on how well the preacher lives.

He also had to consider the impact that the ex-offender's behavior had on the victims, their families, and the community. As a Pastor, the researcher had invested his time in ministry to inmates behind the institutional walls by conducting bible studies, holding church services, which included preaching and singing, and sponsoring the Angel Tree Program. Volunteers bought Christmas gifts that were given to inmates' children. The researcher believed that his ministry to inmates was, for the most part, successful until an ex-offender who had been released for less than a week murdered one of the family members of a member of his fellowship.

This was a difficult period for the researcher, for he performed the eulogy and consoled and counseled the family members of the deceased. However, less than three months later, another church member's loved one was murdered by an ex-offender who had been recently released. After these two tragic deaths, the researcher began to review the effectiveness of his prison ministry at his local church. This project is a consequence of these tragedies. The writer was led to ask himself the following question: "How can the black church be more effective in their ministry to the prison population?"

As the researcher distributed the invitations to participate in the project, he believed that the congregants of his church would be excited about the project and participate. He was, however, disappointed at the participation ratio of the congregants who were a part of the control sample; however, the low participation ratio turned out to be a blessing. The group was large enough however, to extract important data and did not

overwhelm the researcher in his mission to provide meaning interpretation. He selected efficient and well-prepared presenters who addressed the core components of a successful prison ministry and answered many of the questions as to how the church can actively assist ex-offenders and their families. The researcher offered an evaluation to all the participants of the sessions. The attendees were very positive about the sessions and demonstrated that they had expanded their knowledge about the plight of ex-offenders. Initially, the researcher was concerned that the low participation rate of the sample size would adversely affect the true accuracy of data. He wanted to test to see if the control sample was an accurate representation of the attitudes of the entire congregation. So he tested the members of the congregation who did not participate in the project session. The data that was collected from the control group that attended the prison ministry sessions and from the members of the congregation who were not in attendance were analyzed, and the method was examined for reliability. The data led to the following conclusion:

> The findings from the church membership are in concert with the attitude of the control group. Survey results (Question #8) suggest that 29/29 (100%)of the respondents believe that Harris Memorial CME Church should play an active role in the rehabilitation of ex-offenders and a large majority favor active recruitment of ex-offenders. Results also suggest that the church should be involved in political action and social justice within the community. The respondents were strong advocates for helping ex-offenders re-enter society and to become productive individuals.

Survey results for the membership reveal that more than 2/3 (67%) were unaware of any member who may have been incarcerated versus 46% in the post control group. There also seemed to be greater concern about housing the prison ministry in the church. Twenty-one percent of these respondents disagreed with housing it at the church. This group was concerned about the severity and the nature of the offense for specific

offenders. These findings further suggest that those who attended the project benefited by having most of their preconceived notions and fears eliminated. If the researcher conducted this project again, he would have distributed a written invitation to each member's home to give the project added importance, instead of an oral invitation.

This project was the first step in addressing a devastating problem facing the African American population in the city of Dayton. The fact is that a large percentage of a generation of African American males are incarcerated due to the breakdown of the family structure, injustice in the political system, a poor education system, high unemployment, poor health care, and homelessness. The question that lingers after this project relates to the future of the next generation of young men who may have to contend with worsening social, economic, and political conditions. The church has to respond. This project presented examples of four persons who live in the city of Dayton and may have been well on their way to meeting an unfortunate end. However, it was by the grace of God, a good education, and a helping hand from people who cared that they were able to become examples of success.

Now that the writer has assessed the willingness of the congregation, the next phase is to investigate the economic possibility. What are some of the potential problems confronting the church with public funding? Could public funding have a potentially chilling effect on the prophetic voice of the local church? I have already begun to explore these questions.

APPENDIX A

PRE AND POST SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

1. Have you or someone in your family or circle of friends been incarcerated?

   Yes_____ No_____

2. How did you relate to them when they were released?

   a. Rarely
   b. Never
   c. Often
   d. Occasionally

3. Should the Church be involved in helping Ex-offenders?

   Yes_____ No_____

a. Why?
b. Why not?

4. Should the Church encourage its members to actively recruit ex-offender as member?

   Yes_____ NO_____

   a. Why?
   b. Why not?

5. Do you know of any ex-offenders who are or have been members of Harris Memorial Christian Episcopal Church?

   Yes _____ No_____

6. Do you feel comfortable around ex-offenders?

   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Why or Why Not?

7. Do you feel men and women should be incarcerated after they are convicted of a crime?

   Yes_____ No_____

8. Should Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church be involved in prison ministry?

   a. Yes_____ No_____
   b. Why or Why Not?

9. Should Prison Ministry be housed in the church or be incorporated into some other Para-church organization?

   a. Yes_____ No_____
   b. Why or Why Not?

10. Should Harris Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church be involved in political action and social justice issues?

    a. Yes_____ No _____
    b. Why or Why Not?

11. Do you agree that once a person has served his or her time, they should be allowed to be a fully productive participates in this society.

    a. Yes_____ No _____
    b. Why or Why Not

APPENDIX B

RE-ENTRY WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM: MARCH 2007

MARCH 2007 RE-ENTRY WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM

March 2007 Re-Entry Workshop Evaluation Form

Directions: Please select the response which best reflects your rating of each workshop session. Your responses will assist in evaluating each session. Please indicate any additional comments in the space provided.

Session I: Friday, March 16, 2007 – Speaker: Bro. Abdur-Rauf Rashid

a. How would you rate the overall presentation of this session

Excellent ___ Good ____ Fair ____ Poor ____ Very poor ____

b. Information presented was practical and useful

Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ No comment ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree ___

c. How would you rate the speaker

Excellent ___ Good ___ Fair ____ Poor ____ Very poor ____

Session II: Saturday Morning - March 17, 2007 am – Speaker: Hon. Judge Walter H. Rice

a. How would you rate the overall presentation of this session

Excellent ____ Good ____ Fair ____ Poor ____ Very poor ____

b. Information presented was practical and useful

Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ No comment ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree ___

c. How would you rate the speaker

Excellent ____ Good ____ Fair ____ Poor ____ Very poor ____

Session III: Saturday Afternoon – March 17, 2007 pm – Panel Discussion/Q & A

d. How would you rate this time of discussion / questions and answers

Excellent ____ Good ____ Fair ____ Poor ____ Very poor ____

e. Clear and practical answers were provided for questions presented

Strongly agree ___ Agree ___ No comment ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree ___

How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the entire workshop (all 3 sessions)

Excellent ____ Good ____ Fair ____ Poor ____ Very poor ____

We would like to thank you once again for your presence and participation in this workshop. Thank you also for your patience as we have just a few more questions for you.

Would you agree/disagree that additional workshops addressing the issues of ex-offenders be offered in the future

Agree ____ Disagree ____

If you agree, how often do you feel they should be offered?

Annually ____ Bi-annually ____ Quarterly ____

If you are not a member of Harris Memorial CME Church, would you like to have this type of workshop hosted at your church?

Yes ____ No ____ (If yes, please contact Pas. Earl Hudson)

Are you currently serving in some capacity in the community to address the issues presented in this workshop

Yes ___ No ____

If your answer is no, would you be interested in serving on a prison ministry team

Yes ___ No ____

If you answered yes, please get your information to Pastor Earl Hudson or any member of the R.O.O.M (Restoring Onesimus Outreach Ministry) Prison Fellowship so that we can contact you in the near future.

Please use this space to share any additional comments you may have. If there are areas you feel need improvement, please note that information as well.

God bless you and thank you for coming and sharing with us.

APPENDIX C

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH JUDGE WALTER HERBERT RICE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

HONORABLE WALTER HERBERT RICE
JUDGE, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO

Judge Rice was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

He is a graduate of Northwestern University, receiving a B.A. degree in 1958.

He attended the Columbia University School of Law and received a Juris Doctorate degree in 1962. He also attended the Columbia University Graduate School of Business Administration and received a Master of Business Administration in 1962. He received an Honorary Degree, Doctor of Laws, from the University of Dayton, in 1991 and an Honorary Degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, from the Wright State University in 2000.

Judge Rice began his law career as an Assistant County Prosecutor for Montgomery County, Ohio, in 1964.

He left that position in June, 1966 and became an associate with the law firm of Gallon & Miller.

In June, 1969, Judge Rice returned to the Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office as its First Assistant Prosecuting Attorney.

He was elected Judge of the Dayton Municipal Court in November, 1969, and served in that position until July, 1971, when he was appointed Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, Montgomery County, Ohio. He was re-elected to the Court of Common Pleas in 1972 and in 1978.

On June 4, 1980, Judge Rice was sworn in as Judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, at Dayton, having been appointed to that position by President Carter.

Judge Rice served as Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio from October 13, 1996 to October 12, 2003.

APPENDIX D

OVERVIEW OF TRAINING

OVERVIEW OF TRAINING

IN LOCAL

CHURCH SETTINGS

Presented by
Reverend Earl D. Hudson Sr.

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OVERVIEW IN LOCAL CHURCH SETTINGS

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APPENDIX

A. FACILITATING SAME QUESTIONS

B. SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

LOCAL CHURCH SETTING

THREE ONE AND A HALF HOUR SESSIONS

TWO WORK SHOPS AND ONE SEMINAR

1ST Workshop - The inmate's view of the Body of Christ and what role they hope the Church will play on their journey.

2nd Workshop - The local Churches will share its view of the inmates and what role it envisioned for them when they come home.

Seminar – In this meeting we will share our concerns, work through our fears and commit ourselves to each other. As the session ends, we will administer the post test.

WORKSHOP #1

THE INMATE'S VIEW

AGENDA

PRE-ASSESSMENT TEST

OPENING PRAISE AND WORSHIP

PRAYER

HYMN "THE ONE LOST SHEEP" 189 IN THE C.M.E. HYMNAL

SCRIPTURE READING ST. LUKE 15: 3- 7

FACILITATOR SHARING

INTERACTION BETWEEN FACILITATOR AND PARTICIPANTS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Closing Prayer and praise

WORKSHOP # 2

THIS WORKSHOP WILL FOCUS ON THE EXPECTATION OF THE POPULATION TO BE SERVED AND HOW THEY FEEL WE CAN HELP THEM

OPENING PRAISE AND WORSHIP

PRAYER

HYMN, #191 THE C.M.E. HYMNAL

SCRIPTURE ACTS 12: 12 – 23

FACILITATOR SHARING

INTERACTION BETWEEN FACILITATOR AND PARTICIPANTS

CLOSING PRAYER AND PRAISE

Seminar

COMING TOGETHER TO CLEAR UP ANY LINGERING QUESTIONS

PRAISE AND WORSHIP, PRAYER

SONG, HYMN #279 IN THE C.M.E. HYMNAL

SCRIPTURE ISAIAH 1: 12 – 20

OPEN FORUM LED BY BOTH FACILITATORS

POST TEST

CLOSING PRAYER AND BENEDICTION

APPENDIX E

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ABDUR-RAUF A. RASHID

BIO

Abdur-Rauf A. Rashid

Mr. Rashid holds an academic degree in the area of Food Science and Culinary Arts, which landed him the title of Professional Chef. He also, obtained a degree in the area of Hotel/Restaurant Management with a minor in Psychology, and is currently 23 hours away from completion of a fourth degree in the area of Criminal Justice at Wright State University.

Mr. Rashid has been employed in the area of Marketing and Sales for more than twenty years for a major airline. Mr. Rashid, enjoyed an annual salary of over $50,000.00 with free flying privileges any where in the world. However, in July of 2001 his years of experience with the airline industry was terminated after his self-published book call "How To Survive and Excel In Prison (Within and Without) was released.

His book revealed his past and the airline for whom he had dedicated years of service fired him due to his felony conviction. Mr. Rashid was relentless in his efforts to see justice done. Three years later at an arbitration hearing held in Washington, DC, a Federal Arbitrator ruled that Mr. Rashid was to be reinstated to employment immediately with all of his seniority in tact. Mr. Rashid accepted his position to reinstatement, but gave up the airline business a year later to fulfill his passion in working with once incarcerated individuals reentering society.

He then became employed with the Housing of Urban Development in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice, Prisoner Reentry.

Mr. Rashid is the Co-Founder and former Program Facilitator of the A.S.T.A.R. Re-Entry Program (Adult Service/Training Administered for Re-Entry). Mr. Rashid has held various positions as a community activist. These positions include, Executive Director of the National Council of Ex-Offenders, Inc., President of Keepers of the Village, Inc., Member of the City of Dayton's City Commissioner's Coalition Against Youth Violence, Elected to the Board of Trustees of the Miami Valley United Methodist Mission Society, he serves on the Dayton City, Chief of Police's Advisory Board of Police/Community Policy, is a graduate of the Dayton Citizen's Police Academy, nominated for Who's Who in America, has served on the board of directors of the Montgomery County Volunteer Jail Chaplains, a member of NABCJ (National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice). Mr. Rashid has hosted two cable television shows, "Keepers of the Village, Live" and "Outlook on Africa". Mr. Rashid is a pilgrim of The Walk to Emmaus # 30.

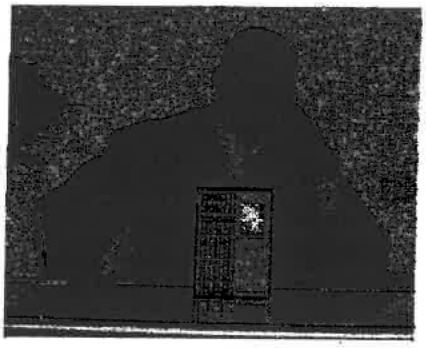
Mr. Rashid is the recipient of numeral awards and presentations. His motivational speaking style is captivating, educational and inspiring. His rapport with youth

incorporated with his mentoring experience builds strong and lasting relationships, and positive influences with those who he addresses.

After all that God has blessed Mr. Rashid to continue to accomplish by "reaching out and raising up", Mr. Rashid holds true to the fact that he is but a sinner saved by Grace!

To schedule Mr. Rashid to speak at your church, youth forums, special events, or to schedule one of his exciting and inspirational lecture seminars.

Contact: Mrs. LaTonya Rashid
Address: [redacted]
Dayton, OH 45426
Phone: 937.837.4456 Cell: [redacted]
Email: natlceo@aol.com



Mr. Rashid is the Author of one of America's most important books ***"HOW TO SURVIVE AND EXCEL IN PRISON" (WITHIN AND WITHOUT)***

APPENDIX F

GOD'S POLITICS

God's Politics
Why the Right Gets it Wrong
And the Left Doesn't Get It
A reflection by Earl D. Hudson

Jim Wallis is an evangelical preacher and one of the leading figures at the crossroads of religion and politics. Wallis has been an Institute of Politics Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, and has taught on faith, politics and society there and at Harvard Divinity. In the introduction of this book Wallis states:

> "Abraham Lincoln had it right, our task should not be to invoke religion and by the name of God by claiming God's blessing and endorsement for all our national policies and practices- saying, in effect, that God is on our side. Rather, Lincoln said, we should pray and worry earnestly whether we are on God's side' Walls continues 'Those are the two ways that religion has been brought into public life in American history. The first way — God on our side — leads inevitably to triumphalism, self—righteousness, bad theology, and, often, dangerous foreign policy. The second way — asking if we are on God's side— leads to much healthier things, namely, penitence and even repentance, humility, reflection, and even accountability. We need much more of all these, because these are often the missing values of politics.' ... 'God is not a partisan; God is not a Republican or a Democrat, when either party tries to politicize God, or co-opt religious communities for their political agendas, they make a terrible mistake. The best contribution of religion is precisely not to be ideologically predictable nor loyally partisan. Both parties, and the nation, must let the prophetic voice of religion be heard. Faith must be free to challenge both right and left from a consistent moral center."[1]

This introductory statement resonated with mc I shall take a retrospective look at the historical attitudes behind the formation of this coalition between Reagan and the Republican Party, Social Conservative and Religious Conservative. The southern strategy of the Republican Party started with the presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan. This former Governor of California opened his race for the white house, not in California where he lived nor in Illinois the state of his birth but in Philadelphia, Mississippi a place that was known only for one thing nationally: the murder of three civil rights workers.

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[1] Jim Wallis,.*God's Politics* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), xiv.

This was a clear signal to the south that the Republican Party was on their side in their efforts to resist racial change through government intervention. Reagan won the election because of his position on the hot button social issues of welfare reform; he coined the phrase "welfare queens." His position on affirmative action and other programs that addressed equal economic opportunities appealed to white blue collared workers and swept him into office with 489 electoral votes to President Carters 49. Reagan won every southern state except Presidents Carter home state of Georgia. Reagan soon went about living up to white southern and blue-collar workers expectations of appointing people to public office who shared his views regarding the role of government and its various agencies. John Hope Franklin states

> "Since its establishment in 1957, The United States Commission on Civil Rights had enjoyed remarkable independence from presidential interference, even when it was critical of presidential policies. It had been bipartisan, an example of which was the appointment of prominent white republican, Jill Ruekelshaus, to the commission by Democratic President Jimmy Carter. In November 1981, Regan notified the chairman, Arthur S. Flemming, that he would replace him, and he nominated Clarence Pendleton, a conservative black Republican who had been executive director of the San Diego Urban League. This was the first time in its twenty-four-year history that a president had removed the chair of the Commission on Civil Rights. This was the first move in a series to replace every commissioner who was critical of the presidents position on affirmative action with people who were opposed to virtually every item on the civil rights agenda."'[2]

Failing to achieve his goals through administrative appointments and the legislative process, and being frustrated by Supreme Court rulings that retarded his agenda. President Reagan found allies in the conservative religious community who were angry over a series of court decision. President Reagan reached out to a group of religious leaders and Tele-evangelist who called them selves the Moral Majority. This group of predominantly white conservative Christians felt that the political parties were ignoring

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[2] John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery To Freedom A History of African Americans* Seventh Edition (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc. 1994).

their concerns and that the Supreme Court had overstepped its authority in its ruling of Brown Verses Board of Education. Accompanying regulations such as forced busing and the withholding of tax exemption status for religious institution such as Bob Jones University in South Carolina. This university barred interracial dating and marriage; Goldsboro Christian School in North Carolina barred the admission of blacks and later others public institutions that have discrimination on the grounds of race, sex and national origins.

The social conservative movement was born from the outraged experienced by many whites over President Truman's fair deal policies instituted by executive order in 1948, this policy required fair employment throughout the Federal establishment without discrimination because of race, color, religion, or national origin. Many southern democrats turned on Truman and formed the Dixiecrat party to oppose his nomination for President in 1948.

By 1956 the Supreme Court handed down several decisions that were death nails too legal segregation and discrimination. Southerner tried unsuccessfully to reverse court decision through the legislative process. Ninety Southerners who served in congress, led by Walter George presented in congress their "Declaration of Constitutional Principal" commonly called the Southern Manifesto which encouraged the use of every "lawful means" to resist implementing court decision that they viewed as a usurpation of the powers of the states, this resistance has continued and evolve to what we see today in the social conservative movement.

Using the same vocabulary and political platform that George H. Brush; social conservative David Dukes, former grand dragon of the klu Klux Klan, replaced his robes

with a three-piece suit and won the Louisiana Republican nomination for the senate. This presented candidate Bush with a public relation nightmare in the midst of his election campaign. If he endorsed the primary winner of his party he would be embracing in a very visual way the embodiment of his agenda in a Klansman. He decided to disavow candidate Dukes publicly and support the election of the opposition candidate. Social conservatives really would like to reverse most if not all of the civil rights gains of the past fifty-one years. In reality social conservatives and religious conservatives share a wide range of public policy goals and have become the political base for the Republican Party. Religious conservatives have help shape the political debate for the Republican Party in terms of family values and have wrapped this agenda in the garment of righteousness. President Reagan and this coalition embarked on a journey to reshaping the federal judiciary especially the Supreme Court and have so politicize the conformation process until all the nominees put forth by either party is viewed to have an ideological agenda. This climate breed's mistrust in people who depend upon the court to be the guardian of there individual freedoms.

Wallis suggests correctly in my judgment, that conservative Christians, are focused on bedroom issues from abortion to homosexuality and have ignored issues of social justice, and or the driving force behind the political rights' agenda. He suggests correctly that this segment of the faith community represents a small but activist minority and does not represent the values of the whole faith community. As a student of the political process I join Wallis in amazement at the tone of the political debate over poverty solutions. The right proclaims personal responsibility as the way to escape poverty a position that is true but will not work without the aid of society and the left cries out for

more programs. Wallis affirms that both personal and social responsibility is necessary to overcome property.

Wallis' analysis of the 2004 election and the role of religion and media coverage were insightful. He states

> "When reporters started talking about the religious issues of this election being abortion and gay marriage, I often corrected the narrow perception that reduces all Christian ethics and values to one or two hot-button social issues. I talked about how poverty, the environment, the war in Iraq, and our response to terrorism were also key religious and moral values questions that were important to people of faith. That wider perspective always made sense to the reporters, and their stories took on a broader view of the issues at stake."[3]

The message Wallis gives to the Silent Majority is to recognize that programs without personal responsibility have not been very effective and neither is responsibility without private and public investment workable; we need both. We must confront bad public policy and hold both political parties accountable for the way they work for the common good. In this time of cooperate greed and political corruption. We must cry aloud and spare not lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin. Our voices must be heard not only to condemn the personal moral flaws of the leader of one party but also to condemn the other party for political corruption. We also must confront religious leaders such as Pat Robinson, Rod Parsley and others like them who claim to speak for the whole faith community and do not share a message that looks out for the common good, but endorses a narrow selfish political agenda.

Wallis states:

> "I have never seen such outrageous behavior by a political party in trying to manipulate religion for its own agenda while disrespecting the faith of million of other believers who disagree

[3] Jim Wallis, *God's Politics*, 8.

> with the Republican political agenda. What do such tactics say about the Republicans' respect for the black churches, When the African American vote was again almost 90 percent for the Democrats? Is something wrong with there faith? Do black churches ban the Bible? The Republicans Virtually claim to own religion. And the Democrats still don't seem to know how to take back the faith."[4]

At the end of this retrospective look at the formation of the attitude behind this triad of Reagan, Social Conservative and Religious Conservative I find the answers to the last set of questions posed by Wallis. It would destroy this coalition, which was built as a reaction to social change.

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[4] Jim Wallis, *God's Politics*, 9.

APPENDIX G

BIBLICAL FAITH AND THE BLACK AMERICAN

Biblical Faith and the Black American
By Latta R. Thomas

A Reflection Paper by Earl D. Hudson

Latta R. Thomas was professor of Religion and Philosophy at Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina at the time of the writing of this book in 1976. He wrote this work to respond to a wave of searching question as to whether the bible supported Black liberation. There were those within the African American community who believed that the bible was just another tool in the hands of white people to keep blacks people blind, quite and dependent in the midst of a society that was systematically design to keep people of African descent in a position of social inferiority. Thomas suggests that many of those who were suspicious and hostile to the bible crossed the economic and cultural strata of the African America community. This group includes the poor and uneducated but there were also person who were highly trained and economically well - off. Muslim converts, Black intellectuals and students, and Black expert testifying to this eroding suspicion and hostility.

Thomas does a brief historical overview of the misuse of bible in America peculiar institution he start this section stating

> "To understand this wave of black hostility toward the Bible, one needs to give deep thought to the fact that for several centuries in western countries the bible has been used- and to a degree still is- an instrument for support of black oppression and exploitation." [1]

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[1] Latta R Thomas. Biblical *faith and the Black American* (1976 Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA) 12

Latta suggest that the truth of the matter is the bible when purged of all human tampering by the shallow minded or by people with evil motives. In fact urges human to rebel against mistreatment as a mater of commitment to the God of heaven and history.

This book contains five chapters with a total of 145 pages. At the conclusion of each chapter, Thomas has developed a group of study question to inspire further examination and reflection of the issues studied in the work just completed. He also developed a glossary of terms for the non-theological reader, growing out of the material presented in his preceding work. Chapter one is entitle The Bible and Black Experience in this chapter Thomas suggest in spite of the fact we were brought to this country against our will and forced to live a life of drudgery, brutality and distorted driblets of biblical interpretation which were shaped to make sure that blacks who heard them would become the permanent mental, emotional, and physical slave of the plantation. Somehow in spite of the design Black slaves were able to find the God of Abraham, Moses and David who sets the captive free. As I read this chapter the words of Joseph recorded in Genesis 50: 20 came to my mind "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

Thomas then explores the practice that has led to this climate of doubt concerning the validity and reliability of the scriptures in the minds of many. The problem of Eisegesis he starts this section under the heading; Freedom of Speech Denied to God in America— Eisegesis this word comes from the Greek word *eis* which means "into" and ***hegesthai*** which means "into" functionally it means to read into. Thomas suggests minorities and poor folks were not the only ones in this society denied freedom of speech. He suggests that God has been and is being denied freedom of speech at various points

and by various groups and person in this country. "In Christian circles the Bible is (or contains or mediates) the "Word" or the communication of God to human beings; yet this form communication from the Divine has been and still is being diluted, distorted, and misinterpreted at many point in this country. In this sense God himself has been and is being denied by those who prevent the real Biblical message from coming through."[2] Thomas suggest that Eisegesis has four main ways that it function in distorting Bible:

> 1st Proof — texting this is the practice of selecting various scripture text in the bible out of context and placing them together arbitrarily to "prove" (some usually preconceived) point." Thomas gives the example of an atheist, who stated that he could prove that the bible condoned suicide by quoting Matthew 27:5, "And throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and went and hanged himself," then the atheist placed beside it Luke 10:37" And Jesus said to him 'Go and do likewise." For any person who has read the bible they recognize that the first scripture relates to Judas remorse for selling Christ for 33 pieces of silver; while the second is our lords admonition found at the end of the parable of the Good Samaritan to good and practice loving compassion to all that were in need.
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> 2nd Over-spiritualization Thomas suggests that this may be the sneakiest form of eisegesis. Thomas suggest this takes place when segment and reference in the bible which has to do with things, events, places and persons of this world and declaring that those passages do not deal with this world but some otherworldly, spiritual, and unseen. Thomas suggest that for the over spiritualizer this concert world lies beyond the concern of god and the bible. These persons "feel that God's creation is somewhat evil at best, and that human involvement in the attempt to eliminate social injustice, war, poverty, oppression, ignorance and disease is questionable and use. Persons who over spiritualized are good at lip service but dose not take seriously either the Hebraic-Christian concept of creation that declares God's handiwork to be very good"[3]
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> 3rd Arbitrary allegorizing, is making assertion that a passage in scripture has a secret or unexplained meaning hidden in metaphor

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[2] Latta R Thomas, *Biblical Faith and the Black American* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1976), 20.

[3] Ibid., 21.

> and then to give ones personal opinion about this hidden meaning without a academic basis to do so. This is to do serious damage to interpretation when someone declares allegories where there are none. This is a road to wild irresponsible personal commentary. Now I am not saying that there are no allegories in the Bible for there are, what I am saying is one should be careful in making this assertion.
> 4th Literalizing, Thomas suggest this is the most widespread form of eiscgetical corruption and rides on the belief that everything written in the Bible must be regarded as referring to factual, chronological events and descriptions of tangible or "five-sense" object. Thomas states "Let the reader beware of the muses of eisegcsis- proof — texting, over spiritualizing, arbitrary allegorizing, and literalizing. There victims are many and their influence deadly."[4]

Thomas then turns to the principal reason for this chapter, which is to reveal to the reader how many white racists in America eisegeted the liberating biblical message in order to support Black slavery and racial segregation and discrimination. He states

> "As contradictory and schizoid as it may sound, there were and are in America White churchmen and churchwomen, emotionally adamant in their claim to be Christian and loyal to the Bible, who believed that God not only permitted human slavery, racial discrimination, and segregation to be directed against Blacks but also that he willed and planned such structures."

Thomas suggest there were some whites acting out of greed and other vested interest sought religious and philosophical justification for Black slavery, racial discrimination and segregation. However many more believed they had the right to own Black slaves because of their biblical teaching and theological indoctrinations. They earnestly believed that the Bible taught that Blacks should be the slaves of white people by divine decree. Many whites of that day and some of this day still base their behavior on this belief. They rest their argument on a teaching known as the Ham doctrine. This set of beliefs came from a shrewd eisegesis of Genesis 9:20 27. Built on the following assumption (1) that

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[4] Ibid., 25.

the story of Noah and his sons was historical; (2) that Ham was black; and (3) that God agreed with Noah in his bestowal of the curse; this conviction was preached and taught in white churches. It was so strongly believed until its influence still exists today. They also drew heavily from some of the writing of Paul, some of the passages are 1 Corinthians 7: 20-2 1; Ephesians 6: 5 —9, 1 Timothy 6: 20-2 1, Philemon vs. 10-18 and a passage recorded by Luke of Paul's address in Acts 17:26. Before leaving this chapter Thomas will states, "under no circumstances should one eisegete, regardless of the temporary advantage or expediency which such may satisfy."[5]

Thomas than introduces the reader to exegesis, it also comes from the Greek. The Greek term from which it is taken is *ek* or *ech* meaning "out of" and *hegesthai,* lead. The functional idea here is that the real and genuine biblical message should be allowed to come "out of" this is the correct way of gleaning truth from scripture.

I really enjoyed reading this book written in 1976 the author took a scenic walk through the Old and New Testament pointing out verses that support Black liberation and clarifying many misconception that have been accepted in this society as fact. Thomas concluded this work with a call of self-examination for the Black church, in Thomas opinion "the church could evade its God-given task if it becomes too misdirected, too timid, and too brainwashed. Without taking seriously its Lord's mandate, it could become a closed, self-serving, institutionalized, good-feeling society dedicated to sanctifying the status quo on Sunday morning instead of "healing the broken-hearted," applying the gospel to the poor, and working for the liberation of the hurt and enslaved." [6] In my opinion this statement is being fulfilled right before our eyes. Many pastors and

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[5] Ibid., 21.

[6] Ibid., 132.

congregation has turned a blind eye to social justice and are in fact sanctifying the status quo.

APPENDIX H

A REFLECTION OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION: A ROAD MAP

A Reflection of Biblical Interpretation: A Road Map
By Earl D. Hudson

Fredrick C. Tiffany and Sharon N. Ringe are professors of Biblical Studies and New Testament at Methodist Theological School of Delaware, Ohio and Wesley Theological Seminary of Washington, DC. They collaborated in the writing of the book, *Biblical Interpretation: A Road Map.* The text was written to resolve some of the presuppositions of the historical critical model. Iain Provan, V. Phillips Long and Tremper Longman III wrote, " . . . there is no account of the past anywhere that is not ideological in nature, and therefore in principal to be trusted more than other accounts." [1] They wrote this in order to dispel' the myth that extra biblical testimony represents an order of evidence available to the historian of Israel that is different from the evidence that the bible presents. The myth that extra biblical text can be used to produce a solid entry called "factual history" that can be deployed to arrive at definitive judgments on the Old Testament testimony about Israel's past "They further suggest that we should not assume in advance that any testimony about the past in what ever ideological, archaeological form it may take speaks about the past truthfully." Tiffany and Ringe argue that, "the contemporary interpreters do not belong to the same world of understanding . . . On the other hand, through! contemporary readers are not a part of the social world of the bible, the bis."[2] Contemporary scholars shoble dose belong to the social worlds of any and all interpreteruld consider the scriptural text and the reading

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[1] Iain Provan, V. Phillips Long and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 68.

[2] Frederick C. Tiffany and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap* (Nashville: Abingdon,
1996), 28.

context in determining its exegetical message. This is a marvelous tool for the student of scripture. It is very easy to read and a good tool to help guild them into good interpretive skills. They state rightly, "at times the task of Biblical interpretation daunts and sometime distresses people who loved the Bible and people are alienated from it alike."

From the early day Christian Church a multitude of persons from various cultural, economic, ethnic, social condition and political environs have read the same scriptural text and arrived at different understandings that were relevant to their circumstances. Through out the centuries in whatever circumstances God's people have found themselves, they somehow found strength to face the vicissitudes of life through Scripture. In most seminaries, the main interpretive tool imparted to students is the historical-critical method. This method was developed as an alternative to readings of scripture that are doctrinally and culturally shaped by denomination. This method reminds us that the Bible is a collection of foreign literature, translated into a text we can understand. While the Bible's origins maybe foreign it is still a very familiar book.

The historical-critical method was shaped by the custom and ideals of the post-enlighten Western Europe and North American scholars. This tool is imperil of a more subtle form of social incarceration because it champion a biblical culture and openly promotes Christian values and doctrines shaped by the denomination as unalterable truth. Bible scholars who are proponents of the historical-critical model are aware that they hold certain assumption which they recognized as being problematic so they present these presuppositions as problems to overcome, rather than an essential feature of the interpretive process that create meaning in the meeting between text and our ability to interpret.

When we view our presuppositions as a problem to compensate for it gives us a different mindset as we approach the Bible. We view these presuppositions as contaminates that will cloud our historical study. Tiffany and Ringe suggest that an important aspect of beginning this journey of biblical interpretation is to pay attention to the identity of the interpreters. They then began to explore the three basic types of context, which they suggest can be distinguished and play a distinct role in biblical studies. They further suggest that each context is important and the information learned about each type of context and about the knowledge they glean from the text itself has an impact on any effort to understand a biblical text.

The three Basic types of context they lifted for our consideration are:

1st The context within, the writers suggest correctly that no bible passage exists by itself, but is like a collection of words on a file card that can be picked out, read and listened to in isolation. They suggest that the literary context must be given due weight. By literary context they referred to the location and function of the scripture within the larger context of the biblical book in which it is located. Without understanding the context and its placement in the biblical book any passage will lose it's meaning and become whatever the reader may wish.

2nd The social context refers to the life circumstances of the readers to whom the larger passage was originally addressed, the author's own assumption about the cultural, political, religious, economic and social value of the community being address.

3rd The writers suggest that the social context is related to the theological context of the specific passage and the concerns, belief, questions that arise and to the declaration to which they point.

As I close my reflection I cannot help but see a contemporary parallels in the way the Liberty University an evangelical school interpreted Acts 2: 38-40 verses the way Oral Roberts University a Pentecostal school will interprets the same passage.

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